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TITLE:-

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN THE SOUTH-
EAST NORTHUMBERLAND COALFIELD FROM THE
EARLY 18TH CENTURY.

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is social and economic change in the south-east Northumberland coalfield. A historical perspective is taken and class formation is examined from the early 18th century. During this early period the working class develops separately but under the rule of capital. Despite resistance the working class is contained and absorbed into the institutions of capital.

In the inter-war period capital pursues a policy of reaction before elaborating new policies and setting up regional development organisations incorporating significant trade unionists and labour party members.

While Nationalization was at first resisted the eventual Nationalization of coal provided a way of restructuring the coal industry in the interests of capital in general. In the immediate post second world war years the policy of the N.C.B., underlined in various planning documents, was to retain labour in the coalfields. However, the modernisation of the pits led to local job losses resulting in the development of Cramlington New Town in order to diversify the areas economy.

I therefore evaluate the New Town's objectives and conclude that they have been met to only a limited extent. The town relying upon branch plants to sustain its manufacturing base.

An analysis of the New Town in the 1980's showing a polarisation between central workers and a reserve surplus with both populations located in separate localities. The contraction of the economic base in Blyth Valley differentially affecting these core and peripheral workers.

Lastly, the development of Cramlington can also be seen as class restructuring and I then go to consider the relationship between housing, class and party vote.

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THESIS

Preface

The focus of this thesis is social and economic change in a particular locality. However, I have tried to set change in a historical and national context. Indeed I would contend that it is impossible to talk about local change processes without reference to the past and to phenomena which transcend locality.

As a stranger to the North East and coming from a place (Northern Ireland) with a distinct and different politics, I have had much learning to do. In some measure this thesis represents a first attempt by me to familiarise myself with unfamiliar territory. Inevitably this has involved description as a means to understanding.

Much sociology and social policy traditions have concentrated on defining the working class and worrying about the condition of that class, its level of class consciousness and the implications of condition and consciousness for action. These are important and legitimate concerns but the result is the relative absence of any consideration of the dominant class. On the other hand when the working class does appear in sociology it is often in the abstract or in the guise of cardboard cut out ideal types. In both instances the working class lacks a voice. However, in trying to recover a working class voice we are faced with a major problem. For although leading actors may record their thoughts and feelings the reflections of the 'man or woman in the street' are hardly ever sought and remain lost to posterity.

In my first chapter I concentrate on the early development of a dominant class and its relationship to the working class. This phase is a story of resistance and defeats. The working class developing

separately but subordinately before it is contained and absorbed into the institutions of capital.

In the inter-war period, which I cover in Chapter Two, capital attempts to escape crisis by carrying out and advocating a policy of lay offs together with wage and social benefit cuts. The effect of this being to make a bad situation worse. Consequently a new policy direction was sought and elaborated and finds reflection in the setting up of regional development organisations under the sway of capital but incorporating leading trade union and labour party figures.

Chapter Three deals with aspects of modernisation concentrating on the politics of Nationalisation and the re-ordering of the space economy as revealed in planning documents. In this context Nationalisation is viewed as a product of class struggle but it comes after the defeat of the General Strike when Fabian notions of public ownership held dominance in the Labour Party. The form of Nationalisation therefore provides a mechanism for the restructuring of the coal industry in the interests of capital. Cramlington New Town only coming on to the development agenda when it was clear that the consequences of modernisation and efficiency in the coal industry would mean local job losses in South East Northumberland.

Chapter Four examines a number of early surveys for what they contain about the objectives and social structure of the New Town. Broadly my conclusion is that the objectives of the town, as far as they can be ascertained, have been met to only a limited degree. From the beginning the town relied upon branch plants to sustain its manufacturing base and I provide a number of case studies together with census of employment figures to illustrate trends and processes involved.

Chapter Five takes the reader up to the 1980's and contains an analysis of Cramlington localities. What this reveals is a growing polarisation between central workers and the reserve surplus population. At the same time the 1980's saw the closure of the last pit in Blyth Valley. An event which I consider in all too brief detail. The decline of manufacturing employment provoking the County Council to adopt economic development policies which I find to be limited and contradictory. Lastly the class theme is re-opened by looking at the relationship between housing, class and party vote. A preoccupation which underpins the interviews in Chapter Six.

As is customary at this point my thanks are due to a number of people for their support. Firstly to Ray Hudson for his patience and to David Byrne for his encouragement and for providing survey material which formed a basis for Chapter Five. Second, to Leo, Robin and Francis for their tolerance and finally to Kevin, Julie and Loreli for their ever open door.

CHAPTER ONE

CLASS AND CLASS FORMATION IN THE NORTHUMBERLAND COAL FIELD

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I intend to consider regional economic development as a process of class formation. The area I intend to look at is Blyth and Cramlington, now subsumed under the administrative unit of Blyth Valley Urban District Council and Northumberland County Council. Reference will also be made to other areas particularly Newcastle. More specifically, I will be concerned to identify an elite, whose ownership of capital or control over the use to which private capital is put, is both a source of its power and a factor constituting that elite as a class as well as enabling its reproduction over time.

Secondly, since I am interested in class formation as a process, an historical approach is essential, for as Gramsci put it;

"It is not enough to know the ensemble of relations as they exist at any given time as a given system. They must be known genetically, in the movement of their formation. For each individual is the synthesis of not only existing relations, but of the history of these relations. He is a precis of all the past." (1)

Moreover, while adopting a historical perspective I will, in the first instance, focus on the economic aspect of class formation because as Poulantzas notes;

"In the complex organisation of a class, it is the economic which holds the dominant role, in addition to determination in the last instance" (2)

This is not to deny that class includes economic, political and ideological class practice but simply to insist that it is important to distinguish different features in order to analyse them. Lastly, the method employed to understand class formation and class interest has been to concentrate, in the first instance, on individuals and family dynasties. What is significant is their reaction to a changing economic and political environment which they both shape and by which they are shaped. It is important to consider concrete individuals and examples in order to test any general theory about capitalist development, the capitalist system, class formation and the relationship between classes.

MASTERS OF CAPITAL

Following the Jacobite rising of 1715 the Plessey and Newsham estates, of which Blyth was a part, passed to the Crown and in 1727 they were purchased by Richard Ridley of Newcastle who took over the working of the Plessey pits. By 1728 the Ridleys had bought the West Hartford collieries so that by 1730 they commanded the whole of the coal trade from the Plessey and Hartford pits. At the same time they owned the only shipping quay at Blyth and had secured from the Bishop of Durham all of the beach on the south side of the River Blyth.

The closing years of the century brought with them competition in the coal trade. A small colliery was opened in the vicinity of the Ridley workings and a shipping quay built on the north side of the River Blyth. The venture proved a failure and the colliery and quay were purchased by Sir Matthew White Ridley.

In 1793 further competition took place with the commencement of a colliery on the adjoining Cowpen estate. The speculators involved included various Newcastle merchants. Soon after, in 1799, another

pit was sunk by the same consortium. The two collieries being known as Cowpen 'A' pit and Cowpen 'B' pit.

By 1813 an agreement has been reached between the Cowpen owners and Sir Matthew White Ridley whereby Ridley closed his Plessey pits and allowed access to his Blyth shipping quay. In return the vend from the Cowpen collieries was increased and Sir Matthew received a percentage of the profits amounting to £1800 per annum as compensation for closing his Plessey mines.

The last of the Plessey pits was closed in 1813. Over the next ten years Sir Matthew increased his interest in the Cowpen mines so that by 1820 he had become sole owner of the Cowpen colliery complex, including eight colliery ships and the colliery farm. Competition still remained in the shape of the Hartley collieries but was resolved by an agreement over vend and prices between the Hartley owners and Sir Matthew White Ridley. However, this agreement could not mitigate competition from the Tyne collieries. Here, regulation had broken down to the extent that Sir Matthew's agent could say that;

"should the fight continue much longer many will be slain." (3)

Fortunately by 1828 the situation had stabilised and the vend from Cowpen pits increased to 80,000 tons.

With the death of Sir Matthew White Ridley in 1836, his son and heir retained John Buddle to undertake a survey of the Cowpen colliery workings and Blyth harbour. Buddle's report indicated that a total of £5000 would have to be spent in order to work certain seams and bring the pits up to full production. After these measures had been taken Buddle anticipated that annual profits would be between £3500 and £4000. It seems that Sir Matthew's son was unwilling to undertake the

required investment and in 1838 the whole Cowpen undertaking was leased to a Messrs. Carr and Jobling.

The Cowpen mines continued to be worked on a leasehold basis for the next twenty years until, in 1858, Sir Matthew sold the mines to a consortium including Joseph and John Straker and John and William Isaac Cookson. Shortly after, in 1861, Cowpen was amalgamated with the North Seaton Collieries to form the Cowpen and North Seaton Coal Co., Joseph and John Straker having in any case been members of a syndicate who owned the North Seaton colliery. After amalgamation the new company sunk the Straker mine in 1874 followed by the Mill pit in 1886.

Yet Blyth was not the only area in which the Ridley family had an interest. In 1834 land at West Cramlington was sold to Sir Matthew White Ridley, making him the principal land owner alongside the Lawsons of Cramlington Hall and the Shum-Storeys of Arcot Hall. Beneath the land was coal so that as early as 1786 a George Green reports to the Lawsons on the difficulties of mining coal while significant individuals control the natural outlets at Hartley, Blyth and the Tyne. Green writes;

"Having therefore considered those ways with various other things relating to the winning and working of coal I am of the opinion that at present it is of very little value now nor is there any prospect of it being of more in the future unless to sell or let to Lord Delavell or Sir Matthew White Ridley, when their collieries are near a conclusion which time is very uncertain and perhaps may not happen for forty or fifty years yet." (4)

However, by 1824 John Straker is writing to John Watson of Newcastle in the following terms;

"As my mission to the metropolis in search of partners for the Cramlington Colliery was not successful we have now thought of making it a Joint Stock company for which Mr. Lamb has drawn up a prospectus. Should we fail to get subscribers for it the colliery materials are to be immediately disposed of and certain to be abandoned.

Your being in London I thought it would be a good opportunity to try the market for subscribers ... if you can manage to get the thing forward with a sufficient prospect of success, Mr. Lamb would have no objection to rewarding you well. Our general hope must rest with the London subscribers." (5)

The mission must have been successful for in 1824 Joseph Lamb is recorded as the major share holder in the East Cramlington colliery, with John Straker acting as his manager. Humble Lamb, Joseph's brother, managed the West Cramlington Colliery. But the Lambs' interests did not stop here. Humble Lamb and Co. owned two pits at Backworth, which opened in 1818 and 1820, while Joseph Lamb and Co. commenced mining at Seaton Delaval Colliery in 1837. By the 1850's two companies existed, J. Lamb and Co. and H. Lamb and Co., both producing high grade steam coal.

It is around the 1860's and after that the Cramlington Coal Co., the Seaton Delaval Coal Co., the Shiremoor Coal Co., and the Backworth and West Cramlington Coal Co. emerge as a product of a series of mergers. Thus, for instance, Lamb and partners' original Cramlington venture developed into the Cramlington Coal Co., operating the

'Amelia', 'Hartford', and 'Lamb', pits and in 1898 it acquired the adjacent West Cramlington colliery then joined forces with the Backworth Colliery Co., itself the product of a merger. At the turn of the century this expanded Cramlington Coal Co. merged with the Seaton Delaval Coal Co. to form the Hartley Main Colliery Ltd which existed until nationalisation in 1947.

Likewise, by the early 1900's the Cowpen and North Seaton Coal Co. had come under the umbrella of the Mickley Coal Co. Ltd which, as well as owning a mine at West Wylam, controlled the Cowpen Coal Co. Ltd, the Hazlerigg and Burradon Coal Co. Ltd, the Acomb Coal Co. Ltd, and William Benson and Son Ltd.

What is significant is the continuity of family ownership and direction, despite changes in capitalist form. The Colliery Year Book for 1946, therefore, lists three members of the Cookson family on the board of directors of the Mickley Coal Co., including the chairman and managing director, Mr. Clive Cookson, all being descendants of the original speculators in the Cowpen mines, John and William Isaac Cookson. With reference to the Hartley Main Colliery Ltd, the 1946 Year Book lists as a director a Mr. R.A. Lamb, a great grandson of Joseph Lamb, one of the first owners of the Cramlington Collieries.

A number of elements can be drawn out from the preceding comments. The leasing of Cowpen colliery in 1836 by Sir Matthew White Ridley rather than putting up fresh capital was symptomatic of a wider process of withdrawal from the coal trade by the landed aristocracy. The Duke of Northumberland, for example, was both a direct producer/ employer and also used sub-contractors to work his mines. By 1799 all his collieries were out to lessees and the Duke never entered the colliery business again. The Delavals, after 1756, ran their own collieries through sub-contractors but the mines were leased out after

the death of Lord Delaval in 1807. The Marquess of Bute sank the Tanfield colliery in 1829 but sold it to the Joiceys in 1847. The Grand Allies, Lords Ravensworth, Strathmore and Wharnccliffe had still been active colliery proprietors in the 1840's but had sold out by 1860.

By 1869 it seems that only 5% of the collieries in England were owned and managed by landowners,⁽⁶⁾ the notable exceptions being Lord Londonderry and the Earl of Durham. In general, landowners were ceasing to be an important source of mining capital as outside capital became more plentiful and the costs of sinking newer, deeper pits rose. By the 1860's it was the Lambs, Joiceys, Strakers and Cooksons who were running the collieries of the North East. Many of these men had started out as merchants, moved on into coal and other manufacturing industry and now put their profits into landed estates.

The landed aristocrats, such as the Duke of Northumberland and Sir Matthew White Ridley, while taking a back seat, still drew substantial and increasing income from royalty and way leave rents. For example the Duke of Northumberland's mineral income grew from £3000 in 1800 to over £20,000 in 1820 reaching £25,000 p.a. by the end of the 1850's and expanding again in the middle of the 1880's.⁽⁷⁾ At this level it was not quite a quarter of his farm rents.

COLLECTIVE CAPITAL AND THE EARLY ORGANISATION OF THE COAL TRADE

A consideration of biography can tell us something about the organisation of the coal trade. However, organisation can also be understood as a form of class action. In the latter half of the 17th century a Nicholas Ridley, coal owner and merchant, was admitted to the company of Hostmen in Newcastle upon Tyne. This company, originating in the Middle Ages, performed the function of entertaining

merchant strangers and supervising the sale and purchase of their merchandise. By 1600 it was the big coal owners who controlled both the company and the municipal government of Newcastle. The coal owners then used the company as an instrument for excluding potential entrants into the field of mining. Secondly, it was the means by which the coal owners protected themselves from the disastrous results of unbridled competition within their own ranks by agreeing and allocating quotas in order to regulate output. With the demise of the company the mine owners sought new means and methods to mitigate competition and maintain profit. By the 1720's a coal owners' combine had been formed. This organisation excluded new entrants to the field by buying up coal land and way-leave leases, blocking off the coal property they could not buy from river outlets and paying other coal owners to leave their mines idle. At the same time the old attempts at regulating prices and output by the use of quotas continued. For example, in 1747 Richard Ridley is writing;

"In order to bring the several persons concerned in the coal trade into Regulation as to Price and Measure it was necessary that everyone should fix a settled proportion of his share of the delivery, which delivery should always be in proportion, so that when any one exceeded what was set for him and another fell short, the person over, agreed to forbear selling any more till the short was brought up; at the beginning of January my Staiths were full and I loaded several ships, which threw me so far forward that I have been obliged to stop three weeks entirely and for another three weeks have delivered only between three and four hundred chaldrons weekly." (8)

When all else failed mixed coal was sold as best coal or prices slashed in order to drive weaker competitors out of business.

Despite the existence of a coal owners' syndicate, there is no evidence to show that regulation existed during the years 1750 to 1771. This lapse of regulation was associated with the expansion of the coal market and increasing demand for coal. In such circumstances there was no need for formal regulation. However, with the expansion of productive capacity production soon caught up with and surpassed demand, leading to complaints of excessive competition. Once again, therefore, the coal owners moved to regulate coal production. From 1772 to 1845, with direction given by an employers' association known as the United Committee of the Coal trade, regulation was constantly being formed, allowed to collapse and reformed under the pressures of competition, market demand and the owners' own failure to agree quotas. The regulation, known as the "Limitation of the Vend" had, by 1845 collapsed under the weight of various forces, both internal and external. Internally, colliery coal quotas were fixed on the size of the undertaking. Therefore there was always the temptation to enlarge plants at the expense of other producers. The consequence of this was highlighted by the report of the 1836 Committee of Enquiry into the Coal Trade. It notes that;

"the pits sunk, and the machinery upon them are capable of affording easily double the quantity at present worked."(9)

Secondly, the coming of the railways, despite opposition from the Tyne and Wear coal owners, opened up the inland coal measures both in Durham, Northumberland and other coal fields. From 1829 to 1876

new collieries streamed into the association at a faster rate than sales increased and the process was much accelerated after 1836. As one observer remarked;

"the old collieries have in fact been obliged to surrender about 50% of their quantity in order to make room for new ones." (10)

Lastly, with the railways providing access to other sources of supply, the economic basis for the Limitation, namely complete control of the London and East Coast markets began to dissolve. The "Economist" of 1845 greeted the end of the Limitation with satisfaction hailing it a victory for free trade. The price of coal it concluded;

"will now be settled by fair and honourable competition, instead of, as heretofore, arbitrarily and with only a vague reference to the great laws of supply and demand." (11)

Yet the end of the Limitation was merely an interlude before an era of increasing combination in the coal trade. Moreover, the collapse of the Limitation did not eliminate the need to make a profit nor did it mean that coal was ceasing to be profitable. Coal continued to be an attractive source of profit, indicated by the fact that investment in the collieries on Tyne and Wear increased from £2 million to £14 million between 1830 and 1860. Consequently the lifestyle of the coal owner was one of opulence, built on and reflecting the profits to be had from coal. For example, by the time of his death in 1834 John Buddle's estates and coal interests at

Benwell and Wallsend were valued at £150,000 while Joseph and John Strakers' estates were valued at £300,000 and £919,000 respectively with William Cookson's estate valued at £592,000. Therefore the much voiced complaints from the coal owners that the returns on mining investment were inadequate needs to be treated with some scepticism. Indeed, given the coal owners' periodic attempts to reduce pitmen's wages and their concern to mollify prevailing free trade sentiment, they had a vested interest in understating the profits to be had from coal trade.

I have noted the involvement of the aristocracy in the coal trade. An involvement which provided the basis for the accumulation of wealth, the acquisition of power and the elaboration of a cultural hegemony. It is to these images of power and authority that I now want to turn.

IMAGES OF POWER

At his death in 1847 the body of the Duke of Northumberland went by road from Alnwick Castle to Gateshead Station and then by special train to London for burial in Westminster Abbey. National and local newspapers described the scene as follows;

"On the news of his death all the tradesmen in Alnwick at once partially closed their shops, and when the funeral procession passed through Newcastle a week later the streets were lined and all the shops closed. In this procession can be seen the county and Northumberland tenantry bidding farewell to their feudal chief. A mile outside Alnwick on the southward road the column halted and the townspeople and household staff dismissed; two

miles further on the mounted tenantry fell away. The reduced party of notabilities from the estate staff and the comptroller of the household passed streets lined with people at Felton and Morpeth on their way, and seven hours later reached the Town Moor at Newcastle where a full procession was again formed. This now included the Mayor and Corporation and many other gentlemen on horseback, and still more on foot, including the committees of the various charities which the Duke had supported. The tenantry of the southern parts of his estate were marshalled in a military fashion according to their bailiwicks, each mounted column under the command of its own bailiff, and the whole accompanied the column to Gateshead station. There would be no mistaking the ducal style of this. An inner coffin of french-polished figured mahogany lined with padded white silk and lace was encased in a lead coffin; over this was an outer coffin of oak covered with rich crimson Genoa silk velvet, emblazoned with the Percy arms in gold plate, and provided with eight coroneted handles and coffin nails also in gold plate."⁽¹²⁾

The expense of this funeral must certainly have been considerable but a minor sum compared with the money the next Duke was prepared to lavish on the reconstruction of the family seat of Alnwick castle. This work, when finished in 1866, made Alnwick into the "Windsor" of the North and was completed at a cost of £320,000. The architects received £14,000 and the Italian artists and carvers £17,000. The main building contractors received £225,000 while £20,000 was spent on

mechanical equipment including steam closets, hydraulic lifts and gas fittings. At the peak of activity over eight hundred workmen were employed and entertained at a works dinner held every year at a cost of four shillings and sixpence per head.

A local newspaper offered a graphic account of the new kitchens, noting now contrivances and gadgets adopted from the technology of industry and mining had been incorporated into the design. The newspaper reporting on the kitchens said;

"They are planned in the Gothic style ... It surprises the beholder that so grand a piece of architecture could be designed in these generate days. A huge baron of beef weighing three hundred weight and numerous other joints were before the principal range all on spits turned by a water wheel. The screen before the fire is of a size, and possesses culinary contrivances and architectural features alone sufficient to confer celebrity on any architect. Not only is water power applied to the rotation of pits, but mechanical devices are used in other ways. Hydraulic presses hoist with steady power the coals from the vaults below, and lift the viands from the kitchen to the galleries which lead to the banqueting hall. Communicating with the main kitchen are separate pantries for the reception of butcher meat, fish, cold meat, stock, pastry and other edibles." (13)

When the Duke was not upgrading Alnwick Castle he was attending to his town house in London or advising on the administration of his town house in the Strand. By the mid 18th century, the Alnwick estate

office was the centre of the most advanced practice in estate administration, involving the management of a considerable labour force working on the estate and castle.

The Duke sat at the apex of the aristocratic establishment in Northumberland but he was not the only powerful aristocrat. On retiring as a member of parliament for Newcastle after thirty eight years, covering eight successive parliaments, the Newcastle burgesses in thanking Sir Matthew White Ridley for the protection of their liberties agreed that the constituency should pass to Sir Matthew's son.

The announcement of Sir Matthew's retirement from all public office did not pass without ceremony. The Newcastle Gazette of 1824 noted that;

"The Corps of the Newcastle Loyal Associated Volunteer Infantry having voted that a magnificent piece of plate should be presented to him, as a token of the high estimation in which they held his conduct as their commanding officer, a splendid silver vase, nearly two feet high, of an elegant Etruscan form, the sides ornamented with military trophies, and the arms of the Ridleys, the cover surmounted by a female figure, representing the town of Newcastle, and the whole valued at £350, was presented to him, August 31, 1812, on which day the regiment assembled in Pilgrim Street, and from thence marched to the Town Moor, attended by a great concourse of people ... " (14)

The Literary Gazette goes on to say that;

"The regiment then greeted Sir Matthew with cheers in which they were joined by the great assembly, which the occasion and the fineness of the day, had drawn together. The regiment then wheeled back into line, when they fired a 'feu de joi', the guns on the castle at the same time firing a salute. The ceremony of presentation concluded by the regiment advancing in line, and making a general salute. Before the regiment was dismissed, Sir Matthew generously presented each company with ten guineas, to regale themselves on the occasion. In the latter part of the day a magnificent dinner was served up in the Assembly Rooms, to the officers, and a large party of visitors, making in all one hundred and thirty two." (15)

On the 16th April, Sir Matthew died while visiting his London home in Portland Place. His body was brought back to Newcastle and interred in the family vault in St. Nicholas Church. Yet even in death Sir Matthew was determined to be remembered having instructed that a monument to his memory be erected in the nave of the church. A report of the time describes the scene as follows;

"This beautiful monument displays in very high relief a full length figure of the deceased, as large as life, dressed in a Roman Toga, and standing in a graceful and dignified attitude. His right hand rests upon an altar or pedestal, and grasps a scroll; at the foot of the pedestal lies a volume, inscribed 'Magna Carta', behind the figure is seen a curule chair, underneath which are

placed the fasces and scales, in allusion to the senatorial and magisterial functions of the deceased, whilst a military standard, on top of which is a lion, is seen leaning against the pedestal; above the standard hangs a shield charged with the family arms At the top of all this is placed a helmet."(16)

Sir Matthew was succeeded by his eldest son, the third baronet. Like his father he had attended Westminster School, then Oxford, finishing his education with a grand tour of Europe. On his return he settled in Heaton, Newcastle, running the family business of collieries, glass works, a bank, the Port of Blyth and the family estates. Following his father's death, he moved from Heaton to Blagdon Hall and in 1827 disposed of his Portland Place house, buying up another London site in Carlton House Terrace and building a much grander residence designed by Nash at a cost of £15,000. The third baronet had ten children. Two of these, Sarah and Janetta, were later to marry into the Cookson family, Sarah marrying John Cookson in 1837 and Janetta marrying William Isaac Cookson in 1843. Past business links had existed between the families when William Cookson's father was a short term partner in the Ridley bank. Now marriage was to strengthen and reinforce these links. By the 1860's the two Cookson brothers had become the dominant partners in the Cowpen collieries after the collieries had been relinquished by Lord Ridley in 1838.

With the passing of the third baronet in 1836 his son, another Matthew White Ridley, inherited the title. Again he followed the well worn path of Westminster School, then Oxford, and the grand tour, eventually marrying Cecilia, daughter of Baron Wensleydale. Some

sense of their lifestyle and outlook can be gleaned from Cecilia's surviving letters. On taking up residence at Blagdon she writes;

"They are capital rooms and a great many of them and the house is very convenient and contains a greater number of chests of drawers and wardrobes than any place I ever saw. The best room is the dining room which is very handsome and has some beautiful pictures, as all the rooms have. The other three sitting rooms are all carpeted and curtained with red, plenty of nice tables and sofas about and very comfortable I am in the saloon at this moment writing. It has a high coved ceiling, very handsome and three long French windows opening into a sort of outer room with a stone floor and windows partly of coloured glass. In this sort of portico there are plants and statues I have not ordered dinner today and shall probably not tomorrow." (17)

While the house and its contents are an object of discussion, the servants also come under the gaze and judgement of the mistress;

"Pearson is a tall man with a drabbish hair and skin, holds himself gracefully and walks well, his manner is good and he seems to know his place. He was a footman to Lord de Grey and I think I recollect his face." (18)

With a small army of servants to cook and clean and order the household and gardens, the mistress was freed to indulge in a social life of visiting and receiving friends, attending parties, arranging

shopping trips to Newcastle and musing upon the manners of acquaintances. Following a party at Ravensworth Castle we are told that;

"All Northumberland and Durham were there and some of London besides, to the number I should think, of five hundred or more ... Dinner was in the library for the Royal party and in the drawing room and dining room for all the rest. Two narrow tables in each room, the whole length. Lord Hardwick gave all the toasts and they were repeated in the drawing room." (19)

On returning from a visit to Meldon, the Cookson family residence, Cecilia remarks that;

"I enjoyed myself at Meldon and was glad to be there and make friends with my sister Cookson. She is a sensible amiable woman and wonderful considering her education ... but not a person of much cultivation." (20)

While after a party Cecilia concludes that her sister-in-law;

"was out of her own set and appeared to great disadvantage." (21)

All these remarks indicate that the world of the northern aristocracy was a well circumscribed one in which manners and cultivation helped mark out status and place distinctions. The rising bourgeoisie such as the Cooksons and Strakers, while wealthy and influential and able to associate freely with the aristocracy could, on occasion, still be seen as "out of their set".

By virtue of her class, Cecilia was certainly privileged but her gender meant that she fell under the sway of patriarchy. The practical effect of patriarchy was first to privilege certain spheres of activity as women's work. Cecilia was therefore responsible for entertaining and overseeing the management of the household. Secondly, patriarchy defined what constituted wifely qualities so that refinement, cultivation and the ability to converse were expected of an aristocratic wife.

With Cecilia having her own important areas of activity, Sir Matthew's primary concern was the oversight of his estates. He also managed to indulge his favourite sport of pheasant shooting, buying a grouse moor in North Northumberland and hunting three days a week during the season. Like many other aristocrats he found time to patronise the arts, spending thousands of pounds on works commissioned from a local Newcastle sculptor.

However, it was Sir Matthew's position as a major land owner and Member of Parliament for North Northumberland that gave him the right to speak on the education of the labouring classes. Therefore in 1870 we find him saying that;

"In this industrial phase of society as it has been called by a foreign philosopher there can be no end more important for the good of the community than the doing of good work; and there can be nothing which does so much good to a man as that he should thoroughly master principles, so that when he is at work he should know not only what to do, but why it is done, and, should be able, if circumstances required him, to vary his work, and pass without difficulty to some other kindred branch of his

employment. A man so taught is a better man and a more useful citizen: he is well educated both for his own good and that of his master and the community. It is not his head alone that the labourer is to live; it is no use to take a boy and give him a great deal of careful instruction in something he will never require, and which will fade out of mind in afterlife. Let him acquire those principles, and that sort of learning which he will be able to make use of when he is a man, which will be perpetually recurring to his mind in the course of the labour for which he destines himself, and which cannot fail to exercise an improving influence upon his performance of the work which occupies his time and thought, and to which, if he be a thoroughly good workman, he would wish to give a real and hearty service. When asked then 'why do you want to educate the labourer?' one answer will be because good education, practically directed, makes good work, and good work is an excellent thing for society, and an elevating influence on the character of the workman. Such an object is in itself worth making an effort for ... It follows that education will raise the value of labour ... and that the labourer should earn more money only by performing labour of greater value to his employer." (22)

What we have here is a statement in favour of strict vocational education, which at the same time allows for a degree of labour flexibility. Behind vocationalism is an assumption that people are to be fitted into pre-ordained slots for life. Allied to this is a rigid

utilitarian conception of education which stresses the learning of useful knowledge. Useful knowledge being the knowledge required to perform a limited range of job tasks. Moreover the worker should know how his particular task relates to the whole operation and production process, and benefits wider society. This sort of knowledge, it is hoped, will increase worker self motivation and pride in the job. Education is, therefore, about increasing the value of labour, making the worker more useful for capital and about producing better citizens. Crucially Sir Matthew's statement picks up on working class concerns about craft pride and a practical component to education but turns these concerns into a set of constraints.

More generally Sir Matthew's remarks are underpinned by a taken-for-granted assumption that he has a natural right to comment upon and influence the subjective formation of the working class. An assumption which was both a shared and defining characteristic of the ruling class and middle class 19th century reformers. This is not to say that capital was or is always united in its dealings with labour. In this context, Sir Matthew's comments can be seen both as an intervention in the class struggle and within the ruling block.

Within the class struggle over education there is a degree of coincidence of interest. Learning and having a skill is an important and necessary achievement for labour while capital needs a varying proportion of skilled workers. However, insofar as education is about acquiring a skill and little more, then it is education structured for capital. More radical notions current in the 19th century expressed very different ideas about working class education. At least four themes dominated. First, education should be self organised and provided by the working class itself. Second, it should be broad and

deference. Calculated precisely because they were highly public and visible acts. In this respect, these charitable actions hark back to the elaborate ceremonial at the second Baronet's retirement from public life, the public giving of money to the regiment, the funeral ritual and the monument depicting Ridley as a Roman patrician. All profoundly visible and widely reported displays bound up with eliciting deference.

In drawing upon the imagery of classical antiquity the Ridleys were also saying something about how they understood the world. It was clearly a world of cultivated masters and uncultured lower orders of whom the first requirement was that they should know their place. Behind the gates and high walls surrounding their considerable mansions, the aristocracy and coal owners were sealed off and defended from the outside world. Indeed, with their vegetable and landscaped gardens, stables and valuable statuary, expensive paintings, ornaments and silver collections they had a great deal to defend. Once outside the walls their coachmen, servants and bailiffs shielded them from the common people. Meeting the working class largely occurred in the formalities of the bench, on ritualised occasions or during organised displays of patronage. When the working class was thought of at all it was in terms of a "foreign body" to be investigated, categorised, feared, controlled, disciplined, punished, improved, encouraged or in certain deserving cases helped with a little charity. The common denominator in all this being that the working class was something to be acted upon.

A number of points can be noted from the preceding sections. The fact that since 1750 one member of the Ridley family has followed another into Parliament, often being elected for the same constituency

of Newcastle or North Northumberland. The Ridley willingness to speak on national issues such as working class education. The ritualistic displays and evocations and the grand imposing architecture of aristocratic mansions. All this proclaims a stability and self confident style, a habit of managing things, people and threats to dominance. A habit and style in which the great were tutored from birth . Think, for instance, of the generations of Ridleys going from public school to Oxford. Learning not only academic subjects but also acquiring a sense of themselves as being born to rule. And rule in Parliament the landed aristocracy certainly did, right up to the middle of the 19th century, only being displaced by electoral reform and business interests. But this displacement of the landed aristocracy as the dominant interest did not mean the disappearance of the aristocracy. The landed interest remained as a political force, well entrenched in the Lords and at county level. Moreover, by the turn of the century many individual aristocrats and landowners remained in Parliament as Conservative members and by then were taking on or extending business interests rather than simply remaining landowners and rentiers. For example, the first Viscount Ridley (1842-1904) became Home Secretary from 1895 to 1900 while his son, Sir Jasper Ridley (1887-1951), held extensive banking and insurance interests, although the first Viscount still had an eye on property, buying the village of Stannington from the Earl of Carlisle in 1900. The third Viscount Ridley (1902-1964) was Chairman of the Consett Iron Company and a director of the Newcastle and Gateshead Gas Company. He was also involved in insurance and banking and was Chairman of Northumberland County Council from 1941 to 1946 and again from 1949 to 1952.⁽²⁴⁾

COAL OWNERS AND COAL COMBINES IN NORTHUMBERLAND

I have touched on the family connections between the Ridleys and the Cooksons and noted that in 1858 John and William Isaac Cookson became partners in the Cowpen Collieries. I now want to consider the Cooksons a little further, firstly because they illustrate a manufacturing bourgeoisie which moves into coal yet aspires to landed status; secondly because an investigation of their coal interest highlights changing forms in the organisation of coal capital in particular the creation of coal combines.

In 1743 Isaac Cookson, a significant member of the Goldsmiths Company, was given a lease to refining houses and an adjoining quay at Elswick, Newcastle, for the refining of lead and extraction of silver. By the 1870's the firm of W.I. Cookson and Company had become well established and the Cooksons had already taken their first steps towards diversifying from coal. However, while the main source of their income was mining and lead refining, it was clear that the Cooksons desired the status of country gentry. As an entry in the Newcastle Daily Journal for instance notes;

"In 1832, portions of the Greenwich Hospital estates in Northumberland were offered for sale by public auction. The chief portion of these estates was the manor of Meldon, consisting of some 2,070 acres, bringing in an annual rent of £2,119, and free from tithe. The Meldon park and estates, once forming part of the deer park of the Earls of Derwentwater, as was natural, excited keen competition. Mr. Isaac Cookson became the purchaser of the estate for the large sum of 56,900 guineas. In the same year he commissioned the rising Tyneside architect,

Mr. John Dobson, to design him a suitable house, which would be in keeping with his means and family connections, and at the same time make the estate a residence for a country gentleman. This was duly carried out, and there now stands perhaps the finest of the many noble halls designed by Mr. Dobson in this country." (25)

Later, John Cookson, when not overseeing his lead and coal interests, managed to improve and extend the Meldon estate to 4,192 acres so that it yielded more than double the rental at the time of purchase.

COAL COMBINES

(a) The Cookson Group

By the end of the 19th century the Mickley Coal Company had been formed. It controlled four other coal companies operating in Northumberland, namely the Cowpen Coal Company Ltd; the Hazlerigg and Burradon Coal Company Ltd; the Acomb Coal Company Ltd; and William Benson and Son Ltd. Right up to the nationalisation of the coal industry, three members of the Cookson family sat on the Mickley board of directors, with Clive Cookson acting as chairman and managing director. Moreover, the three Cookson directors and other members of the Cookson family held the largest block of shares.(26)

Apart from the Mickley Coal Company the Cooksons had other financial interests in the North Walbottle Coal Company and the Seaton Burn Coal Company. Meanwhile, Norman Cookson, until his death in 1909, was the chairman of the Wallsend and Hebburn Coal Company and a director and major shareholder in Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Company.(27)

But the Cooksons' interests went further still. Clive Cookson, along with Lord Ridley, appears on the 1939 board of directors of the Consett Iron Ore Company, thus establishing a link into the Durham coalfield.⁽²⁸⁾ The Consett Iron Ore Company in its turn is listed as owning eleven mines in County Durham employing 10,000 men as well as a steel works, coke oven and by products works at Consett.⁽²⁹⁾

Another director of the Consett Iron Ore company was Sir Cecil Cochrane who was also on the board of the Bolsover Colliery Company, a Nottingham and Derbyshire based coal company.⁽³⁰⁾

While the Mickley Coal Company held the largest block of shares in the Hazlerigg and Burradon Coal Company the second biggest shareholder was William Cory and Sons Ltd, a large coal merchanting and exporting firm from South Wales. Also, one of the directors of the Hazlerigg and Burradon Coal Company appeared on the board of the Ruabon Coal and Coke Company and Llay Main mines, both North Wales companies.⁽³¹⁾

These inter-regional linkages do not, however, exhaust the scope and reach of the Cookson family, for both Clive Cookson and Sir Cecil Cochrane turn up as directors of the Consett Spanish Ore Company Ltd, a company with substantial interests in the Orconera Iron Ore Company Ltd, a Spanish mining company. For its part Orconera was jointly owned by the Consett Iron Ore Company through its subsidiary Consett Spanish Ore and by Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds Ltd, a large South Wales coal, iron and steel combine.⁽³²⁾

Meanwhile the Cooksons lead and antimony business did not stay static with Cookson and Company, being transferred in 1922 to Cookson Lead and Antimony Company and in 1930 forming part of the much larger group of Goodlass and Wall, becoming in the 1960's the Lead Industries Group.⁽³³⁾

Throughout all these changes in capital form, the Cooksons remained central. Roland Cookson, for example, became chairman of the Lead Industries Group in 1962 by which time the company was just outside the top one hundred British companies by turnover. In 1955 he was appointed a director of the Consett Iron Ore Company Ltd and became chairman from 1964 until nationalisation in 1967. His other interests included a directorship of the North East Electricity Supply Company until its nationalisation in 1947 and in 1964 a directorship of Lloyds Bank Ltd, becoming chairman of its Northern Regional Board in 1966.⁽³⁴⁾

The Cookson group was not alone in constituting a major coal combine in the Northumberland coalfield. Two other groups are worth mentioning, namely the Priestman-Joicey group and the Furness-Gainford group.

(b) The Priestman/Joicey Group

The chief company in the Priestman Joicey Group was the Ashington Coal Company with members of both the Priestman and Milburn families being the major shareholders and directors.⁽³⁵⁾ It was linked through the Priestman family to two other Northumberland Coal companies, Priestman Collieries Ltd, operating seven pits, and J.L. Priestman Ltd.

The Priestmans also had share interests in the Elswick Coal Company which in turn provided directorial links to the Stella Coal Co., the Throckley Coal Company and the Wallsend and Hebburn Coal Company Ltd. Likewise their major shareholding in the Hartley Main Collieries brought them into alliance with the principal shareholder, James A. Joicey, and lesser shareholders such as the Lambs.⁽³⁶⁾ Later a marriage would bring the Joicey family into a working partnership

with the Dickinsons, a Newcastle firm of solicitors.⁽³⁷⁾ It was through the Dickinson firm that coal profits and compensation monies would be funnelled into the property and finance sector enabling, among other things, the building of Cramlington New Town in the 1960's.

(c) The Furness/Gainford Group

The last and least significant combine operating in Northumberland was the Furness Gainford Group. It does, however, illustrate the links, both directorial and financial, which had been established with the iron, steel and shipbuilding interests of Viscount Furness. The chief unit of this group was the Broomhill Collieries Ltd., operating two pits. The chairman of Broomhill was Viscount Furness who was also chairman of the South Durham Steel and Iron Company Ltd.⁽³⁸⁾ This company in turn controlled Cargo Fleet Iron Company, manufacturers of steel rails. However, the Viscount's coal interests did not stop at Northumberland for he was the chairman of Weardale Steel, Coal and Coke, a concern operating six pits in County Durham.⁽³⁹⁾ Another director of Broomhill was Lord Gainford, for a time the deputy chairman of the Durham Coalowners' Association and a prominent figure in electricity undertakings in the south of England.

Other companies linked to Broomhill by directorate connections included the Wingate Coal Company of Durham, the Easington Coal Company, the New Brancepeth Colliery Company and the Trimdon Coal Company, all Durham based companies.⁽⁴⁰⁾

In the case of Broomhill close arrangements clearly existed between coal, iron and steel enabling transfer pricing from coal to steel producers, thus disguising coal profits.

CAPITAL AND LABOUR

(a) The Formation of a Working Class

Prior to 1820 the area now defined as Seaton Valley was hardly developed at all compared with the neighbouring townships of Blyth, Newsham, Cowpen and Hartley. At this time the Seaton Valley area was mostly devoted to agriculture with some degree of 'land sale' mining.

The specialisation of the area took place in the 19th century, transforming Seaton Valley into a coal production area. It was not a matter of a few local pits supplying a few local industries but significant deep mines exporting coal and dependent upon markets in the south of England, the Baltic and Northern Europe. In terms of a space economy, South East Northumberland in the 19th century represents a sub-region operating as a functional unit within a national and international economy largely dependent on coal as the major energy source.

While local capitalists raised capital and opened pits and regional coal owners moved into the area, land owners such as Lord Ridley at Cramlington and Blyth, the Duke of Northumberland at Earsden, Backworth and Holywell, Lord Hastings at Seaton Delaval, Seghill and New Hartley and the Duke of Portland at Ashington, leased land to the coal companies. But without labour no coalfield and no coal commodity production could come into being. Therefore throughout the 19th century South East Northumberland, Blyth and Ashington became locations for the concentration of labour, with census statistics indicating that the population of the area increases as mines develop.

Cramlington for example, increases from a population of 330 in 1821 to 5,745 in 1881; Seaton Delaval from a population of 271 in 1831 to 4096 in 1891 and Ashington from a population of 519 in 1851 to 10,000 in 1898, with a coal company labour force of 3,500.

(b) From Total Control to Incorporation

Unlike workers in engineering or cotton, the work experience of the miner did not, at least up to 1914, depend to any great degree upon scientific improvement or technological advance. This in part reflected the employers' unwillingness or inability to invest. Indeed the industrial villages of the mining industry are the usual location given to the 'pre-industrial' practices of coerced labour, truck, penal discipline and so on. A comprehensive picture of these mining communities can be gained by looking at the reports of the Mines Inspectorate from the 1840's onwards.

The central feature which emerges from these reports is that the so-called pre-industrial practices were actually the reverse - that is, open and considered attempts to enforce and maintain a total industrial discipline. Truck, for example, was more to do with obtaining and holding on to labour than with profit. A "tommy shop" manager claiming that;

"Without a store we could not get many of our men to attend work, before we had one they got advances in cash daily from the office, got drunk and kept their families starving."⁽⁴¹⁾

Otherwise truck was justified in terms of controlling drinking habits, either by restricting the availability of alcohol, or at least by

cutting down the time lost by providing it 'on the spot' or in set amounts per week. Truck meshed in with a system of fines at source, with employers claiming that this was the only method of enforcing discipline and achieving quality. Another form of control was the employers right to "arrest wages" so that if a local trader had a debt with an employee, he could ask the employer to deduct a weekly sum to be paid directly to him. The other side of this coin being that employers attempted to coerce striking workers back to work by insisting that local traders stop the giving of credit. Lord Londonderry is noted for this tactic but according to Welbourne⁽⁴²⁾ he was then widely imitated by other employers. When all else failed blackleg labour was imported, for example from Ireland, from Cornwall and from the workhouse, in order to break strikes. Then there was the widespread use of selective victimisation and the blacklisting of strike leaders who then found it impossible to get work in the locality.

Apart from truck, the miner until 1871 was legally bound to his employer, usually for a period of one year when the bond came up for renewal. Welbourne gives a graphic description of the bond and the signing procedure;

"Every April the manager of each colliery read aloud to his assembled men the terms of service for the coming year. The bond which the men were required to sign was a long document ... It opened with a description of the manner of working and a statement of the hewing and putting prices. Clause after clause followed until no matter seemed to be left open for dispute. From the demand that the hewers should at need undertake work of

any kind the clauses turned to such trivialities as the restraints on keeping dogs and pigeons in colliery houses." Moreover; "the reading of the bond contract was done in a hurried, unmeaning manner while at bonding time officials were wise enough to put on their most affable manner ... meanwhile beer in abundance washed down any dislike of the proposals and the offer of a guinea to the first man who signed the bond ensured a rush at the opening of the office door." (43)

However, these sweet stuff tactics, employed to encourage the signing of the bond, were often of only momentary success.

Yet another weapon in the employers arsenal was the use of mass evictions during labour disputes. This followed from the fact that the employer was usually the landlord and local magistrate. But the power to determine the character and allocation of the housing stock had other insidious effects. For example, the type of housing provided reflected the status at work, reinforcing divisions within the community while housing itself could be used to influence behaviour. In this regard Fynes⁽⁴⁴⁾ notes that during a strike at Cramlington in 1865 a few of the strikers returned to work, lured by the promise of a deputy's place with "its upstannen wage and dooble house in Quality Raa".

Like truck, the provision of housing helped to maintain and keep labour, but in a dependent position. Most companies provided accommodation to married men only. In the northern counties housing was customarily rent free and marriage or "settling down" not only secured a home but in many districts also a pay rise. The rise in pay partly a recognition of the lack of female employment. Clearly what

was being encouraged was a family unit, dependent at some stage in the family life cycle on the single male wage. The hope being that this would produce a "responsible workman", less likely to take industrial action because of family commitments and the threat of eviction not only of himself but of his family.

Despite these systems and strategies of pervasive control, worker resistance did take place. At the root of the conflict was, on the one hand, employers' attempts to reduce wages, alter, ignore or dispute the terms of the bond or otherwise interfere in working practices. On the other hand, the miners tried to at best increase or maintain their wages or at worst limit any wage decrease while at the same time defending working practices and areas of autonomy. All this class action was played out against the background of a market for coal over which neither the employers, after the collapse of the limitation of the vend, nor the men, had any real control and whose fluctuations each responded to.

Yet a reading of both Fynes and Welbourne indicates that a defining characteristic of trade unionism in Northumberland and Durham was its defensiveness. This conservatism in turn had its roots in the upholding of custom and practice as a way of maintaining certainty over the regulation of effort to wages. Consequently the unions' main purpose was the defence of agreements and a defensive reaction to innovation. Even cavilling, the miners self-managed practice of rotating work places by a random allocation in order to even out wages, can be seen as a democratic sharing out of the fluctuations of the market. In other words, rather than establishing a minimum wage to which additions could be made, cavilling accepted the logic of market forces while attempting to ameliorate its worst effects.

Broadly, the early historical trajectory of Northumberland Miners' Union is marked by a break around the late 1860's. Prior to this date the Union had twice been formed and twice collapsed after the strikes of 1832 and 1844. In both instances the employers had used every power at their disposal including the filling of pit villages with police and special constables, the widespread use of eviction, the exclusion of miners and their families from workhouse relief and the use of rumour and disinformation.⁽⁴⁵⁾

With the formation of the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund in 1862 and the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Mutual Confident Association in 1863, the stage was set for the emergence of a moderate union leadership who attempted to limit industrial unrest. Certainly the defeats of past unions in lost strikes was a powerful inducement to moderation but moderation's material basis lay in the fact that limited gains were possible. As long as gains occurred moderation and its spokesmen became legitimized.

Various pointers signify the new relationship between the employers and the union. The ending of the bond system in 1871 is followed by the formation of a Joint Committee of miners' leaders and coal owners. At a more symbolic level there was the building of a hall for lodge meetings by a Newcastle coal master.

It was through the Joint Committee that both the wage advances of 1871-2 and the reductions of 1875 were negotiated, with the miners executive attempting to 'police' the agreements. According to Welbourne⁽⁴⁶⁾ this system of deciding wages ended because it "excited too keen an interest amongst the men and provoked serious discontent". Its successor, the sliding scale, had two important consequences; firstly, it removed direct responsibility for wages from the union,

and secondly, it established the principle that prices rather than any custom or agreement govern wages. Like cavilling, the tying of wages to prices via a sliding scale was an acceptance of the logic of market forces. However the sliding scale mechanism was not a substitute for the Joint Committee but rather an addition to it, the terms of the scale still having to be jointly agreed.

The change of emphasis from confrontation to the incorporation of union officialdom at a county level in both Northumberland and Durham is therefore apparent. Looking back for example, Welbourne notes that;

"In 1869 men were being dismissed their work, for spreading the principles of combination. In 1872, the union had met in formal friendly conference with the masters. A joint committee had been formed to settle disputes on pay and hours, and conditions of work, a committee to which men and management alike appealed." (47)

(c) Politics and Ideology in the Northumberland Coalfield in the late 19th Century

The most obvious feature of the union leadership after 1865 was its rejection of a class model of society. The union leaderships of both Northumberland and Durham were Gladstonian Liberal and non-conformist. In their economic views they believed that the market operated by laws which could not be contravened. Moreover, market relations were not thought of as class relations but as functional relations governed by the invisible hand of market forces.

In Northumberland the most prominent representative of Radical Liberal non-conformism was Thomas Burt, leader of the Miners Mutual Confident Association from 1865 to 1913 and Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade from 1892 to 1895. The essentials of Burt's philosophy can be readily stated.⁽⁴⁸⁾ First, and in conjunction with a rejection of a class model of society, was a belief in class collaboration. This accommodative attitude included opposition to strikes in principle and stressed conciliation and arbitration as a means of resolving differences. Burt therefore opposed the strike of 1887, called in response to a 15% wage reduction demanded by the coal owners. He was also instrumental in setting up and developing the Joint Committee and the sliding scale. Lastly, the logic of a philosophy which saw no fundamental conflict between capital and labour and laid stress on co-operation opposed the establishment of a separate working class party. The basis for this opposition being that such a party would institutionalise difference, encourage conflict and divide the nation.

Just as Burt's collaborationism had practical consequences so too did his belief in the free working of the market. This led him to advocate free trade, to oppose state intervention and to disapprove of the early trade union practice of restricting output. In 1892 we therefore find Burt voicing opposition to the Eight-Hours Bill and, by taking thirty five Liberals with him into the opposition lobby, effectively defeat the Bill. Likewise, he opposed the policy pursued by the Miners' Federation of a minimum national wage. Finally, in supporting county unionism Burt attempted to persuade the Northumberland miners against joining the National Miners' Federation thereby undermining attempts at national solidarity.

Burt's views concerning a harmony of interests between labour and capital were echoed by the more progressive coal owners. In 1875 for instance, J.W. Pease is found saying that;

"He had never admitted and he hoped he never would admit that there was any opposing interest between the employer and the employed ... They had their times of prosperity in which they had rejoiced and they had had times lately when the workmen's remuneration had been reduced very considerably and when the profits of the coal owners had also been reduced, if not to nothing, to a very low figure ... Pease and Partners had thrown open their rooms to the Trade Unions, believing and hoping that while the men were looking out for themselves they would look at the position of the employers and the employers would also try while working for themselves to look at the position of the men, so that employer and employed might go hand in hand, not only for the benefit of each other but for the benefit of the community at large. (49)

Liberalism then was not only a shared ideology but a cement which bound both employers and county union officials in a common purpose. At the level of national politics the Liberals relied on men like Burt to carry the working class vote for the party. Moreover, the presence of labour in Parliament helped legitimise the State. Speaking to the House of Commons in March 1882 on a motion proposing an extension of the franchise, Gladstone clearly recognised the benefit to be gained from a strengthened presence of responsible labour;

"It is greatly to be desired that there should be some enlarged representation of Labour in the House. We have at present among us only two members whom we can call, in the strictest sense representatives of Labour. I ask the House whether the specimens before us, in the member for Stoke and the member for Morpeth (Thomas Burt) ... I ask whether these two specimens are not such as to lead us to desire that extension. Nothing contributes more to the union of all classes, to the strengthening of the Constitution, to making the nation one in heart and sentiment, and thoroughly attaching the people to their country, than thus to open the doors of the House of Commons to the representatives of the people." (50)

Also the experience of responsible labour could be drawn upon to influence and modify the workings of the state apparatus. Therefore in offering Burt the Secretaryship of the Board of Trade Gladstone notes that;

"The development of the Labour Bureau and the prosecution of the interests connected with it will engage the attention of the Government, and open a long and broad perspective, and I am very glad that your place at the Board of Trade will supply you with a post of influence where your experience and ability may be made directly serviceable for purposes which you have so much at heart." (51)

Just what that purpose was Burt made clear when addressing the Miners' National Union in 1895;

"Everybody must see", said Burt, "that the great problem of the time was the reconciliation of the interests of Labour and Capital." (52)

It was with this over-arching aim of class reconciliation in mind that Burt could look back on the setting up of the Joint Committee as his greatest achievement;

"If it had not existed", remarked Burt, "long protracted strikes would have ensued." (53)

Even initially hostile coal owners such as R.O. Lamb when opening 'Burt Hall' in 1895 had to admit that;

"the greatest improvement that had taken place was the cordial agreement that existed between the coal owners and the miners." (54)

Yet if we allow for Burt's accommodating attitudes his "Radicalism" lay in the fact that he supported franchise extension, exposed "Old Corruption" and aligned himself with leading intellectuals such as Alfred Marshall and T.H. Green against Malthus and Ricardian economics. Like Green and Marshall he advocated a moralised capitalism and relied upon an evolutionary conception to support his thinking and practice. Within this moralised capitalist framework;

"Progress would go on steadily if slowly, till the official distinction between workingman and gentleman had passed away." (55)

From Burt's vantage point in Parliament;

"Leaders of the union did not need to tramp from door to door and beg their bread (as they had done after the collapse of the 1944 strike) they sat at Westminster, governors of the nation."(56)

The position then was that after 1872 elaborate Joint Committee, sliding scale and arbitration arrangements came into being. These arrangements were under pressure at a local level from the mid 1880's onwards. Sometimes a coal owner abused the sliding scale by setting "unfair" reductions of wages below the county average. This in turn provoked localised strikes which the owners responded to with lockouts, evictions and blacklisting. But at a more significant level the sliding scale and Joint Committee arrangements only worked if depressions were not so severe as to force the owners to make requests of the union leaders that the men could not tolerate. In addition the sliding scale had a fundamental defect. It enabled the owners to quote low prices in their competition for contracts and since price conditioned wages then wages automatically fell. The whole system was inherently unstable. For example, in the midst of a depression in 1886 the coal owners demanded a wage reduction of 15%. This move was more than the men could bear. According to the Durham Chronicle;

"The men had been getting a little bacon for breakfast, and the children got the fat. With the proposed reduction there would be neither bacon, nor fat."(57)

In an attempt to protest at the proposed wage reduction and in order to back up a demand for a 20% wage increase, the men withdraw their labour and a strike commenced which lasted for seventeen weeks. From the beginning the union leadership opposed the strike with Burt;

"going from colliery to colliery telling the men that reduction was inevitable and that concession and negotiation alone could make an end of the dispute".(58)

In the end the strike was settled with the men sullenly accepting a 12% wage reduction.

Such episodes slowly dissolved the credibility of union leadership. And the effect was cumulative. Each crisis after 1890 weakened the grip of the progressive coal owners as they were driven to ever more severe measures to overcome the resistance of the men to wage cuts. Moreover, the fact that these same coal owners were often prominent Liberals helped discredit the Liberal party amongst the miners. Indeed the actions of the masters increasingly undermined the Liberal trade unionists since their position depended heavily upon the "goodwill" of the coal owners. However the crisis of 1886/87 had still other consequences in that it provided the space and opportunity for socialist agitation and organisation in the Northumberland and Durham coalfields to take root. It was this organisation which slowly chipped away at the base of Liberal support amongst the miners in the years up to the 1920's.

(d) The Working Class Presence

The leadership in the Northumberland coalfield from the 1860's onwards was solidly liberal in its ideology and practice stressing as it did constitutionalism and gradualism. But what of the wider working class? Certainly in so far as the leadership sprang from the working class and depended upon it for their continued position, they reflected sections and currents within the class. However it was never only a case of reflection since the leadership also attempted to

mould and direct the class so as to accord with their liberal sentiments. Therefore Burt regularly sent circulars around the lodges outlining his views and requesting compliance with his recommendations. However, I am moving the narrative on too far.

If we go back to March 1831 all of the miners in Northumberland and Durham were on strike for a general advance of wages and shorter hours. A meeting of 20,000 miners assembled on the Newcastle Town Moor. Speakers objected to the terms of the bond and to the power of the coal owners to evict miners from their homes. The meeting also discussed the injustice of being forced to remain idle at Christmas without compensation. In the end it was resolved to petition Parliament, to boycott the "Tommy shops" and to remain on strike.

By April some pits had returned to work, but according to Fynes;

"1,500 miners visited these collieries in the neighbourhood by Blyth and Bedlington and laid the pits off work by various destructive devices."(59)

After this incident and during the course of a strike riot a number of pitmen broke into the house of a colliery viewer leaving a letter behind. It read;

"I was at yor hoose last neet, and meyd mysel very comfortable. Ye hey nee family, and yor just won man on the colliery. I see ye hev a greet lot of rooms, and big cellars, and plenty wine and beer in them, which I got ma share on. Noo I naw some at wor colliery has three or fower lads and lasses, and they live in won room not half as gude as yor cellar. I don't pretend to naw very much, but I naw there shudn't be that much difference. The

only place we can gan to o the week ends is the yel hoose and hev a pint. I dinna pretend to be a profit, but I naw this, and lots a ma marrows naws te, that wer not tret as we owt to be, and a great filospher says, to get noledge is to naw wer ignerent. But weve just begun to find that oot, and ye maisters and owners may luk oot, for yor not gan to get se much o yor own way, we gan to hev some o wors now"(6)

Attempts to increase wages and reduce hours provided the basis for collective action. But united purposive collective action was something which was achieved, it did not happen automatically. Sometimes, as we have been, the ranks split and "blackleg" miners returned to work only to be forced out again. At other times, as in 1875, the Cowpen Coal Co. miners rejected the strike weapon despite a proposed 20% wage reduction, and then failed to agree any alternative grassroots action. Instead, they pressed the union to accept no more than a 6% reduction or failing that take the matter to arbitration.(61)

But collective activity and a sense of injustice was not confined to the workplace nor to the miners. The feeling that "there shouldn't be that much difference" and that "we are not treated as we ought to be" was widespread, extending to the working class as a whole.

For example, on Monday 11th October 1819 two months after the Peterloo massacre, an open air protest demonstration calling for constitutional reform was held in Newcastle. It was hoped that the buoyant state of the coal trade together with the threat to dismiss

men who attended would curtail support. In the event, from fifty to one hundred thousand people marched into Newcastle including pitmen from outlying villages, sailors from Sunderland and Shields, shoemakers and others.

After "Radical Monday" radical "classes" were formed in all the surrounding villages and ports while the "Black Dwarf" could be seen;

"in the hat crown of almost every pitman you meet".(62)

Then according to Thompson;

"against this Radical threat the Newcastle loyalists formed an armed Association. Against the armed Association the pitmen and forgers began to arm in their turn".(63)

However, by the end of December 1819 the Radical movement, itself a continuation of earlier Jacobin and Republican agitation, was in a state of collapse brought on by divisions among Radical leaders and the repression of the Six Acts.

By 1830 the formation of "Hepburn's Union", persistent restriction of output and a series of strikes in the Northern Coalfield represented further collective effort. But the bitterest opposition from the coal owners was provoked not by demands for improved conditions or higher wages but by restriction of output and by infringement of managerial control. Activities which can be viewed as harbouring a latent syndicalism. The most elaborated expression of this syndicalism appearing in working class publications around 1833 with a plan for a "House of Trades";

"which must supply the place of the present House of Commons, and direct the commercial affairs of the country, according to the will of the trades which compose associations of the industry. This is the ascendancy scale by which we arrive at universal suffrage. It will begin in our lodges, extend to your general Union, embrace the management of trade, and finally swallow up the whole political power".⁽⁶⁴⁾

According to Thompson⁽⁶⁵⁾ this vision was lost almost as soon as it was elaborated. But just how widespread this vision was and how much momentary support it had remains an open question. Certainly no trace of such a vision can be found originating from the early leadership of Miners' Association in the northern coalfield.

Eight years on and June 1838 saw another popular upsurge this time in support of the People's Charter with seventy to eighty thousand people assembling on Newcastle Town Moor. Many of these people included miners from the pit villages at Cowpen, Seaton Delaval, Cramlington and Sedghill.

However the significance of Chartism was not so much its physical force manifestations as the fact that it shifted the focus to political representation rather than economic exploitation. For according to Gammage;

"the masses look on the enfranchised classes, whom they behold reposing on their couch of opulence, and contrast that opulence with the misery of their own condition. Reasoning from effect to cause there is no marvel that they arrive at the conclusion, that their exclusion from

political power is the cause of our social anomalies".(66)

The issue then is one of political exclusion and the remedy universal suffrage. Once universal suffrage was achieved representatives of the labouring classes would be in the majority in Parliament, 'old corruption' overthrown and economic justice prevail. Therefore a characteristic of Radical rhetoric is the distinction between the represented and unrepresented rather than the employer and the employed. Every oppression, distress and hardship is laid at the door of lack of representation while universal suffrage will issue in an age of social justice and material prosperity. It is within this context that Hepburn, following the defeat of the 1832 strike and his personal victimisation, could say at a Reform meeting;

"Only get the Bill and every working man will have rum in his coffee every morning".(67)

Or as the Northern Star put it, writing on factory legislation, in April 1839;

"If they [the people], as they easily may, compel the tottering imbeciles who now hold the reins of government to restore their rights of universal suffrage, a parliament so chosen will soon teach these mill devils [owners] to dance a very different tune".(68)

While Radicalism in its early phase was an alliance between the working class and the middle class around the issue of political representation Chartism clearly had wider economic and social implications for many of its working class advocates. At the very

least a working class presence in parliament meant that capitalism could be controlled and humanised. At most the land would be confiscated and redistributed among the working class, the numbers of idle rich, rentiers and 'shopcrats' diminished, education made by and for the working class and community sentiment replace competition.

Given these implications the wider extension of the suffrage met resolute hostility from the properties classes. Their fears were expressed by Macaulay the Whig historian, speaking in the Commons after the presentation of the Second Chartist Petition in 1842;

"But I believe that universal suffrage would be fatal to all purposes for which government exists, and for which aristocracies and all other things exist, and that it is utterly incompatible with the very existence of civilisation. I conceive that civilisation rests on the security of property ... and if it be that fact, that all classes have the deepest interest in the security of property, I conceive, that this principle follows, that we never can, without absolute danger, entrust the supreme Government of the country to any class which could, to a moral certainty, be induced to commit great and systematic inroads against the security of property."(69)

It was a hostility which materialised in deeds as well as words. For example, in 1839 Chartists held meetings at Cowpen and Cramlington. Many miners armed themselves with pikes in readiness for the start of the 'Sacred Month' (August) when they believed that the land would be taken from the land owners and divided among the working

class. Indeed the landlords were requested by the men to give up their lands quietly. However the 98th Regiment of the Kings Cavalry was quickly sent to Cowpen, Cramlington and Seghill, the meetings broken up and leaders arrested.

Later miners at collieries including Seghill and Cowpen struck work following a call for a National Strike after the first Chartist Petition to Parliament had been rejected. But generally the national call failed to gain national support and the Northumberland men returned to work. However, as far as the mining districts of the North were concerned Tremenheere could describe them as;

"hotbeds of Chartist intrigue and infidel teaching".⁽⁷⁰⁾

A view shared by his political masters and the coal owners. Nor was the collective activity purely a male matter. In the winter of 1838 for instance three hundred women at Messrs. Cookson's plate glass works had twice come out on strike when their employer had attempted to change the day and method by which they were paid. Then, when Cooksons dismissed an overlooker at the factory because of his Chartist activities the women marched through the streets in his support, enrolled in the Female Political Union and pledged to "take care of the dismissed man's future welfare".⁷¹⁾

In Mining Districts by contrast women were excluded from the labour market. For according to the Children's Employment Commission of 1842;

"pitmen not only kept their wives out of the pits, they denied them any outside occupation holding that the care of their homes, their families and their men was work sufficient".⁽⁷²⁾

Yet when bailiffs came to evict families and turn furniture on to the street it was;

"hard for men to keep their anger within bounds an harder still for house-proud women".⁽⁷³⁾

Therefore women would take an active part in repulsing bailiffs and would agree a strategy of banging pots and pans to warn and raise the district at the approach of police or candymen.

By the 1850's Chartism had declined and failed to achieve any of its six demands. Certainly in so far as Chartism was bound up with economic want and insecurity the general upturn in the economy after 1851 dampened down Chartist support. Meanwhile argument over physical force and moral persuasion strategies divided the Chartist leadership as did confusion over ultimate objectives and immediate tactics. In addition state repression acted to disorganise and deter Chartist activity. Cole and Postgate⁽⁷⁴⁾ indicating that after Chartist strike action in 1842 fifteen hundred people were arrested and 79 transported to Australia.

On their own though such explanations are not enough to account for Chartist failure. Essentially Chartism thought that no improvement could take place until universal franchise was achieved. When the Government repealed the Corn Laws in 1846, passed the Ten Hours Act in 1847 and the Mines Regulation Bill in 1850, it seemed that change was possible by pressurising the existing system rather than pushing for full blooded political reform. Moreover in the decades after 1850 there occurred the expansion of working class organisations of defence such as trade unions and institutions of self-help such as co-operative stores and relief funds. The effect of

this was to direct working class energies into the protection and strengthening of these autonomous organisations

While many coal owners feared that the development of these institutions would enhance the capacity of the working class to maintain a strike, the more astute representatives of capital such as Hugh Taylor, Sir M.W. Ridley and later Jonathan Priestman supported the establishment of self-help initiatives. Taylor and Ridley actively promoting the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund and Priestman supporting the Ashington Co-operative stores.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Indeed by 1863 the Relief Fund had £4,500 invested with the Tyne Commissioners, £2,340 invested with the North East Railway Company and £500 invested with the Blyth and Tyne Railway Company.

The years 1840 to 1850 therefore mark a watershed. Before 1850 Chartism tied together political and economic reform and extra parliamentary activities within a broad working class alliance. After 1850 working class organisations of defence and self-help expand in order to mitigate the constant insecurity of everyday life. Trade unions concern themselves with a narrow economism and with the defence of status and rights inside the workplace while politics is reduced to and channelled into Parliamentary forms.

As far as the ruling class is concerned a key feature of its strategy was concession and change so that essentials might remain the same. Bagehot in the second edition of 'The English Constitution' published in 1872 offers this advice;

"But in all cases it must be remembered that a political combination of the lower classes, as such and for their own objects, is an evil of the first magnitude; that a permanent combination of them would make them (now that

so many of them have the suffrage) supreme in the country; and that their supremacy, in the state they now are, means the supremacy of ignorance over instruction and numbers over knowledge ...

So long as they are not taught to act together, there is a chance of this being averted, and it can only be averted by the greatest wisdom and the greatest foresight in the higher classes. They must avoid, not only every evil, but every appearance of evil; while they still have the power they must remove, not only every actual grievance, but where it is possible every seeming grievance too; they must willingly concede every claim which they can safely concede, in order that they may not have to concede unwillingly some claim which would impair the safety of the country."⁽⁷⁶⁾

Furthermore, alongside the institutionalisation of trade unionism the post Chartist years saw a series of Factory Acts with educational provisions, paralleled by the growth of provided religious schools supported by Government grants. These schools served mainly to instil Christian dogma, to establish basic counting and literacy and to teach deference, punctuality, cleanliness, politeness and self-discipline.

Just how far this education system succeeded in reforming the subjectivity of the working class remains an open question. Tremenheere⁽⁷⁷⁾ however was clear that he expected education to counter union influence and radical ideas and produce conformity and respect for authority, praising the Consett Iron Company for its educational efforts and insisting it was a model to be followed.

The twenty years between 1860 and 1880 saw the consolidation of the miners' union in Northumberland and Durham, craft unions in general and self-help organisations. A consolidation which excluded many women, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, home based artisans and the poor. Groups who had previously been included in the Chartist movement. At the same time Liberalism established itself as the prevailing orthodoxy.

By the late 1880's, however, the first cracks appear in Liberal hegemony. In 1887 delegates from the London Docks addressed meeting after meeting in the North in support of their claim that the state should nationalise the means of production. Welbourne explains that;

"In one Northumberland pit village 8,000 men gave them an enthusiastic vote of support. Then, two years later Henry George, the advocate of land nationalisation appeared on the platform [at the annual miners' gala]. Before long the men of both counties were demanding the abolition of royalty rents. More and more the new cry for economic change took the place of the old Radical political enthusiasm until in the North the liberals saw their alliance with the miners broken by what they were pleased to call ingratitude." (78)

The formal process of turning away from the Liberal Party was completed by 1910. In July 1906 the Northumberland miners voted for an eight hour day in the coalfield. A year later in August 1907 they voted to affiliate to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, then in May 1908 they voted by 14,371 votes to 10,169 to affiliate to the Labour Party. (79)

But it would be incorrect to read this process as a turn towards socialism. Rather it was about finding a more suitable vehicle by which to pursue electoral and parliamentary politics. For on the one hand the miners displayed a stubborn economism and a concern about bargaining rights at work and regulation of the workplace. On the other, a history of industrial defeats, of failure to establish the union, of victimisation and the pervasive power of the coal owners meant that Parliament was constantly looked to for the redress of grievances. Only the countervailing power of Parliament, it was thought, could offset the power and influence of the coal owners.

The acceptance of Parliamentarianism and gradual reform was therefore deeply entrenched in consciousness. In addition the gradual extension of political democracy at a local level and the ability of the miners to concentrate their vote because of single occupation villages or towns encouraged support for electoral politics.

(e) Religion and the Working Class

The importance of Methodism in the Northumberland coalfield can be appreciated just by considering the numbers of chapels built in the area in the nineteenth century. By 1882 the Cramlington area alone had six chapels, two from each of the three branches of Methodism. Moreover, many of the leaders of the Northumberland and Durham miners were Methodists.

What then was the significance of religion? A reading of Burt's autobiography⁽⁸⁰⁾ indicates the austere effects of Methodism. The Burt household made a virtue of frugality, good housekeeping and self discipline. Temperance was upheld and enjoyment was to be had from reading the bible and "Pilgrim's Progress". This picture reflected

the wider injunctions of Methodism. John Wesley, a central Methodist, rejoicing that Methodists had abstained from;

"reading plays, romances or books of humour, from singing innocent songs or talking in a gay diverting manner".(81)

In Welbourne's account the Methodists had;

"Fought the evils of drunkenness, gambling and improvidence. They took away from the pitman his gun, his dog and his fighting cock. They gave him a frock coat for his posy jacket, hymns for his public house ditties, prayer-meetings for his pay-night frolics. They drove into the minds of a naturally independent race the idea that extravagance was in itself a sin, until the falling wage sufficed for an ever-advancing domestic comfort."(82)

In other words Methodism played a key part in suppressing older forms of popular working class culture and "civilising" sections of the working class. Secondly, the stress on frugality and condemnation of extravagance tended to encourage a toleration of wage reductions.

A major problem for the industrial bourgeoisie in the early 19th century was that of sustaining worker discipline and effort. Mere wage payment, incentive or coercive systems could never secure whole-hearted compliance and increases in productivity. What was needed was inner self compulsion and it was this inner compulsion which Methodism supplied. For the Methodist was a saved person. But only God could save souls. Therefore in order to have a chance of salvation you had to maintain yourself in a state of grace by serving the church,

nurturing your soul, submitting to authority, and applying both self-discipline and self denial. Indeed labour itself was blessed and the greater the exploitation the more blessed it was.

Salvation, however, was always provisional. You could fall from grace and thus wreck your hope of salvation by straying from the path of righteousness. Constant vigilance and self examination was therefore necessary in order to maintain correct behaviour and make certain election to the ranks of the saved. It was Sunday worship which provided the appropriate form for collective self examination, confession and outpouring of emotion.

Methodism then was very much concerned with psychic repression and release within the bounds of religious observance and worship. In general spiritual and emotional energies were deployed in the service of the church and individual salvation rather than directed towards radicalism.

The overwhelming tendency was for Methodism to constitute a conservative force. But this process was not without contradictions. To quote Welbourne again;

"It was true that the management of their little chapels gave some pitmen a dangerous habit of self-sufficiency Many a man was to pass out of the bible into newspapers. Many a boy who had learned to read the scriptures was later to reject the improving books of colliery libraries and prefer exciting literature, Chartist and infidel tracts ... The building of the chapel was the first lesson in communal effort. In the management of the services was an opportunity for the natural leader, in the administration of the funds an

education in business method. At the class meetings the men lost their fear of self-expression. In the pulpits the local preachers practised oratory. Later this gift of speech was to be used to recite the tale of the pitmen's wrongs, and to stir the men to union and to strike. The Bible furnished many an economic argument, many a warning to the rich, many a threat to the oppressor. The Sermon on the Mount is an education in social equality, the Old Testament a trumpet blast to the warrior ... under banners embroidered with texts the pitmen assembled lodge by lodge, at their meetings. 'He that oppreseth the poor, reproacheth his maker'." (83)

Without exception Methodism retained a puritanical zeal which reformed and informed interpersonal relationships. The bible, however, could be interpreted in more than one way, a fact that led to the formation of various sects. The Primitive Methodists or Ranters stressed the material as well as the spiritual uplift of the poor. The bible could provide justification for a moral condemnation of inequality. It could make distinctions between oppressive and honourable employers. It could even require the 'nationalisation' of the land. Yet there was a limit to interpretation. What a reading of the bible could not do was provide a 'scientific' critique of capitalism as a system. More than anything else religion demanded individual reformation. Even in its more radical versions it tended to require that individual employers be made to see the light and transform themselves into good employers. It did not offer a critique of the capital labour relationship as such.

CONCLUSION

According to Hughes the first half of the 18th century saw a double revolution in the North combining the demise of the old largely Catholic landed gentry and the rise of a new ruling class. The new families such as the Carrs, Ridleys and Cooksons made their way to their great houses and substantial estates via smaller estates. Their wealth coming in the first instance from trade, banking and industry.

By 1852 Lord Ridley was organising the Conservatives election campaign in Northumberland but as we have seen the Ridleys were active at other times and in other places. Be it in 1812 commanding the Newcastle Volunteers, a consciously anti-radical force, or in the 1860's supporting the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund.

With their wide and often overlapping business interests and their connections through marriage and political association, these families constituted a powerful ruling class. Within the world of this class the habit of managing things and people was acquired even though differences over tactics and policies existed.

By 1869 the majority of the landed aristocracy had ceased to own and manage mines. It was now the likes of the Cooksons, Lambs and Joiceys who ran and owned the collieries in the North East. Nevertheless, the aristocracy, while ceasing to be the master or leading class, preserved large areas of influence and privilege for itself.

Towards the end of the century coal combines dominated production in both Northumberland and Durham, many companies being closely integrated into iron, steel and coal by-product manufacture. Allied to this a pattern of inter-locking directorships reflected the often complex and numerous interests of the directors.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries labour is assembled in particular localities in ever increasing numbers in order to produce coal. At the same time the enforcement and maintenance of a total industrial discipline is attempted, reflected for instance in the use of the bond system. Yet despite pervasive control, labour consistently resists attempts to have a commodity or thing like status imposed upon it.

Sometimes this resistance expresses itself in the development of the Chartist movement or in the formation of the trade union or in the accommodative strategies of Burt. Sometimes it works for the establishment of co-operative societies, voluntary organisations and alternative forms of working class education.

All the while the coal owners attempt to "incorporate" or "disincorporate" the union according to their own economic exigencies.

After the collapse of Chartism in the 1840's energies are directed towards building organisations of defence. According to Anderson and Nairn the working class henceforth;

"Evolves separate but subordinate ... with an intense consciousness of separate identity and a permanent failure to set and impose goals for society as a whole ... The very intensity of its corporate consciousness realised in and through a distinct hermetic culture, blocking the emergence of a universal ideology ..."(84)

While this characterisation contains an element of truth it is somewhat overdrawn. Certainly subordination and intense awareness of a separate identity can be recognised as fitting the Northumberland Miners. But what is missing here is any acknowledgement of resistance post 1840 and any reference to real struggles and to differing

oppositional and socialist currents within the class. Moreover, the Anderson Nairn thesis relies on a absent abstract working class which is supposed to behave in a revolutionary way. The English working class is then measured against this abstract category and found wanting. On the other hand Thompson adopts a realist position by asking us to examine real events. To consider the class as it is not as we might wish it to be. He notes that after Chartism failed to overthrow capitalism the working class;

"Proceeded to warren it from end to end. Each advance within the framework of capitalism simultaneously involving the working class far more deeply in the status quo."(85)

This description accurately reflects the historical trajectory of the Northumberland miners and the working class in general. But the situation is one of contradiction. For at the same time labour displays a historical impulse to escape commodification. However, these escape attempts do not automatically mean revolutionary action. More frequently escape has been via reformism and this too must be recognised as a form of class action. A form with pervasive and deep roots precisely because it has secured limited gains. Reformism, however, offers only partial solutions. The social formation remains a capitalist one therefore pressures to reverse gains and impose a commodity status are ever present as is the impulse to maintain gains and resist commodification.

While accepting much of the force of the argument as to the conservative nature of Methodism, I have also pointed out the radical inflexion which religion could take and the fact that within theology

itself there was a struggle over the meaning of scripture and the role of the church. The working out of this struggle having an influence on the wider class struggle. Moreover, elements of theology stressing charity and mutual support could be taken up and counterposed to naked laissez-faire. But this moral philosophy had limits since it acted to ameliorate circumstances rather than change relationships or provide a "scientific" account of capitalism.

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- (84) P. Anderson; Origins of the Present Crisis, p.34, in P. Anderson and R. Blackburn (eds) Towards Socialism, London, Fontana, 1965.
- (85) E.P. Thompson, "The Making of the English Working Class", Penguin Books, 1968.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM REACTION TO INCORPORATION

INTRODUCTION

Historically the Liberal Party represented business and manufacturing interests as opposed to agrarian capital and landlord interests lodged in the Tory Party. From the 1830's onwards the Liberals challenged the old corrupt and paternalist order. But Liberalism was not only a party, it was also an ideology. As an ideology it stressed individual sovereignty and right to property which in turn was dependent on a free market and minimal State intervention. Although in practice the State did intervene to maintain social order while State passivity was itself a form of class action. The new Poor Laws representing a social policy designed to underpin market hegemony. The Chartist movement of the 1820's and 1830's prompting a series of electoral reform Acts indicating that the Liberal State of 1867 intended to incorporate the working class into the nation on the basis of limited suffrage and under the tutelage of the Liberal Party. The presence of Lib/Lab M.P.'s such as Burt and Fenwick reflecting the considerable success of this strategy.

From the 1880's onwards a succession of crises originating from various sources act to break up Liberal hegemony. First, the 1889 dock workers strike and its reception in the northern coalfield is an early sign of the organised working class looking to separate from the Liberal Party and establish independent political representation. This search for independence quickens over the next twenty odd years culminating, for instance, in the 1907 vote by the Northumberland miners to affiliate to the Federation and the 1908 vote to affiliate to the Labour Party. Second, widespread agitation for mass democracy

begins to disrupt and undermine Liberal unity. Third, the Irish question crystallises ruling class fears about the security of the empire, splits the Liberal Party and reanimates jingoistic sentiments. Dangerfield⁽¹⁾ claiming that these multiple threats provoked the death of Liberal England. Yet as we shall see Liberal ideology, if not the Liberal Party, was still a force to be reckoned with well into the 1920's and 1930's.

On the other hand the pre-war and inter-war periods witness pressure for collective solutions to crises so that the State is called upon to intervene on behalf of collective interests rather than simply adopt a night-watchman role.

Once again the pressure for collective provision and solutions arise from a number of sources. At a certain point the intensity of system dysfunction means that the reproduction of market relations depends upon a level of State intervention. In addition the organised labour movement exerts pressure from below, both the Labour Party and the T.U.C. supporting extensive social reform programmes by the early 1900's. At the same time the State itself as it attempts to investigate, regulate and manage has an inbuilt tendency to expand and multiply its functions. As well as this, the years 1900 to 1914 saw an upsurge in worker militancy and syndicalist activity heightening the fears of the establishment that a socialist transformation was imminent. Welfare measures could then be deployed to defuse protest, win electoral popularity and prevent workers turning to extreme solutions.⁽²⁾

If we move on to the terrain of politics then at least three political forces can be identified pushing for collective welfare provision. The New Liberals who speak of universal rights such as the

right not to be impoverished or ill-educated and whose policies aim to compensate those who for legitimate reasons cannot participate in the market. The Fabians who elevate the bureaucrat and expert and call for State regulation. The Social Imperialists, a broad cross party grouping, which talks of the need for need for national efficiency achieved by welfare at home and imperialist development abroad.

What results from the action of this plurality of forces is a series of social reforms including old age pensions, social insurance, minimum wage legislation and the setting up of labour exchanges. However, these reforms represent the formation of a social assistance State which while benefiting certain categories of workers also promises to strengthen the commodity status of labour. For example, welfare provision frees fit family members from the necessity of caring for old and infirm relatives thus allowing them to enter the labour market. Social insurance pegs entitlements and benefits to employment, work performance and contributions. Old age pensions free up the labour market by enabling employers to rid themselves more easily of older, less efficient workers.

In this chapter I consider the politics surrounding the coal industry commissions of 1919 and 1925 in order to illuminate class and State relations. I then move on to look at the General Strike, its consequences and the response of the regional bourgeoisie to the inter-war crisis. A response which shifted from neo-liberal to increasing calls for State intervention and attempts at modernisation of the regional economy on the basis of re-incorporation of leading labour and trade union representatives.

THE POLITICS OF CLASS CONFLICT

By 1914 coal was central to the British economy.⁽³⁾ Railways, still the main method of transporting people and goods, ran on steam engines fuelled by coal. Ships burnt coal in their boilers while coal carrying significantly contributed to the prosperity of shipping lines. At home, coal was the basis of power for nearly all industrial processes while abroad coal was a major export earner. Domestic heating and cooking in Britain's nine million homes relied on coal. Mine workers numbered over a million and with their families constituted one tenth of the population and a significant section of the organised working class. In coal producing regions such as the North East the relative weight of the mining population within the general population was even more pronounced. The most widespread and visible expression of working class identity and presence being the cloth cap.⁽⁴⁾

As Britain stood on the brink of war the main branches of production in the Northern coalfield were inter-connected. These linkages included inter-locking directorships, price-fixing rings, and overarching employers' organisations. While the northern combines had inter-regional and overseas interests, the majority of their capital was grounded within the region either in mines, machinery and equipment, housing and railways, in related coal by-product activities or in trade generated by production in the region.

The period up to 1921 saw the coal combines, the heavy industries and engineering generally make super profits first in the war years and then in the inflationary boom just after the war. Between 1918 and 1920 prices soared. Therefore, at its conference in Southport on 14th January 1919, while the coal industry was still

under Government war-time control, the Miners' Federation agreed to demand an increase in wages of 30% (i.e. three shillings a day on average throughout the coalfield), a six hour day and the nationalisation of the mines with some degree of workers' control. The Government in reply offered one shilling a day and a Committee of Inquiry. This offer was rejected and when a national miners' ballot showed a six to one majority in favour of industrial action, notice of a national strike was given starting at the end of February. Under the threat of a national strike in a key industrial sector, the Government proposed a Royal Commission to be chaired by Sir John Sankey, with equal representation of labour and employers and promised to implement the Commission's findings provided there was no strike. At the same time the Government indicated that it was prepared to use all the coercive power it could muster if the national strike went ahead without first waiting for the Commission's report. Strike notices were therefore suspended until the Royal Commission made its interim report.

(a) Evidence from the Sankey Commission

As witness after witness appeared before the Sankey Commission their evidence revealed how each understood the condition, operation and future of the coal industry.

The Duke of Northumberland representing the coal royalty owners said that for the year 1918-1919 he had received a gross royalty income of £82,450. He then justified this income as a necessary and legitimate return enabling him to upkeep and manage his estates. His only regret being that the State took approximately £50,000 in various taxes and duties. An amount he considered excessive.⁽⁵⁾

As far as nationalisation of the mines was concerned the Duke saw this policy as the thin end of the wedge;

"I mean to say that they [the M.F.G.B.] are only going in for this scheme of nationalisation as a step to something far more drastic and for measures more revolutionary ... probably the control of all the resources of production of all the industries in the country ... they want the complete control of the coal industry for themselves. I do not think that the State is going to have much control in the matter." (6)

With these thoughts in mind the Duke reflected on the course of action to be followed if the Commission recommended nationalisation;

"Well I should do my utmost in the House of Lords and in trying to organise opposition in the country of any scheme of nationalisation." (7)

While the Duke was concerned to prevent nationalisation the following exchange indicates that other issues did not have the same priority;

Ques:- Do you deny the death rate amongst children in Durham and Northumberland?

Ans:- I do not know anything about the death rate.

Ques:- Is it not worth your while to see how these people live, to see what causes these deaths?

Ans:- You think landowners have nothing to do but examine statistics. I am a hard working man. I am not a privileged man like you. I cannot afford to waste time sitting on a Commission like this. (8)

The same attitude regarding infant mortality extended to miners' housing. For having strongly denied that the miners on his estate lived in hovels, the Duke went on;

"I insert in every lease that the colliery owner is bound to keep the [miners'] houses in a proper state of repair." (9)

The questions and answers then continued;

Ques:- Have you been round to see if they are kept in a proper state of repair?

Ans:- No I have not had a chance yet; I have been too hard worked.

Ques:- You took the estate as you found it and nothing done?

Ans:- What do you mean nothing done?

Ques:- Improving the miners' houses?

Ans:- The miners are not the only people in the world. I have a lot of other people to look after besides miners. (10)

As far as the landowner was concerned the royalty system should remain intact. The fact of land ownership was justification enough for money got from coal royalties. Any questioning of the right to own land and the minerals beneath it, of royalty payments or of estate management was seen as gross interference and met with condescending irritation and threats to resist any change to the status quo.

Lord Gainford appearing for the coal owners was just as strongly opposed to nationalisation commenting that;

"I am authorised to say, on behalf of the Mining Association that if the owners are not left in complete executive control, they will decline to accept the

responsibility of carrying on the industry, and though they regard nationalisation as disastrous to the country, they feel they would, in such an event, be driven to the only alternative, nationalisation on fair terms."(11)

But it was not only nationalisation which was ruled out. According to Lord Gainford;

"Any system of joint control, whether between the State or with representatives of the miners, would be absolutely unworkable and subversive of discipline and detrimental to national interests ... there is no firm of employers who would carry on the industry for a moment if they were not going to have the direction of the business."(12)

While the owners resisted nationalisation and joint control, evidence before the Commission had highlighted both the inefficient and uneven nature of the industry under private ownership. This observation raised the question of compulsory grouping to form larger combines and a more rational organisation. Once again Lord Gainford voiced his objections;

I have come to the conclusion that such combinations are a mistake and produce more evils than they do good. A colliery which ought not to be maintained as a separate entity, or is ill-equipped, or is a badly managed concern, is encouraged, whilst the good and well equipped and economically managed concerns are prejudiced. Such subsidies and doles promote reaction and retard progress."(13)

Having rejected any interference in the structure of the industry that would undermine the "free enterprise ethic" or the control of the coal owners and directors, Lord Gainford suggested the repeal of the existing Minimum Wage Act. In addition;

"The wages of workers in each district, instead of varying with the selling price of coal should be regulated with reference to the profits resulting from the industry in that district."(14)

Linked to this the coal owners proposed a profit sharing scheme so that;

"A community of interest between workmen and employers is established alike in increasing output and in promoting economy of production."(15)

Within this framework;

"Joint Pit Committees will secure that full advantage is taken of the experience and practical knowledge of the workmen in all questions relating to safety and industrial efficiency."(16)

The Joint Pit Committee would therefore be a purely consultative body with the final say over pricing and investment or underground operations resting with mine management and the Board of Directors. The only way that miners would be allowed to exercise influence over these areas was by becoming individual shareholders;

Ques:- So that unless men become shareholders they are not to have a voice in the management, commercially of the industry for ever?

Ans:- That is my view. The industry would collapse at once otherwise. (17)

At one level then the Joint Pit Committee had limited functions, at another it was an attempt to incorporate while seeking to put the "experience and practical knowledge" of the workmen at the service of capital. Likewise the profit sharing scheme was clearly intended to promote a harmony of interest between labour and capital.

Turning to the inefficiency of the industry and the problem of uncompetitive and backward pits, Lord Gainford offered an explanation and a solution. The explanation lay with the miners themselves;

"The terms demanded by the miners have frequently prevented and retarded fair trials being given to coal cutting and labour saving appliances which managers have been keen to introduce." (18)

The solution was the invisible hand of the market;

"My reply is that under the system of private enterprise the tendency is always to bring them [backward pits] up to standard and very rapidly if it is worthwhile carrying them on." (19)

But while the coal owners demanded a free hand for themselves they were happy to see the State selectively intervene with regard to mineral ownership and royalties. A contradiction not overlooked by the Commissioners;

Ques:- You are suggesting that the royalty owners must be controlled even to the point of interfering with their ownership where necessary ... but you do not see any necessity for the coal owners being controlled?

Ans:- I do not, because I believe that the demand for coal which the nation had put forward has always been met by the industry. (20)

Faced with the evidence from the witnesses, the Sankey Commission produced four reports. The Chairman's report commended State ownership of both the coal royalties and the mines with fair compensation to the owners. The justification for State ownership of the royalties was succinctly put;

"Under State ownership there will be one owner instead of nearly 4,000 owners of the National Asset, and the difficulties caused under the present system in regard to barriers, drainage, pumping, boundaries and support will largely disappear." (21)

Turning to State ownership of the mines the chairman set out a number of reasons for favouring nationalisation. Firstly, a reliable supply of cheap coal was needed for both the householder and industry. Secondly, State ownership would allow industries and consumers a voice in deciding the amount and price of coal. A facility not available under private ownership. Thirdly, competition was depressing the export price of coal while the 28,000 retail distributors inflated the inland coal price. Moreover, lack of capital in some mines and inadequate management prevented the development of coalfields. Lastly, it was hoped that State ownership would bring economies of scale, therefore;

"Unification under State ownership makes it possible to apply the principles of standardisation of materials and appliances and thereby effect economies to an extent which is impossible under [the present] system."(22)

However, while economic rationality pointed in the direction of State ownership labour/capital relations in the coalfields and movement in working class consciousness also indicated a strategy of nationalisation. According to Sankey;

"The relationship between the masters and workers in most of the coalfields in the United Kingdom is, unfortunately, of such a character that it seems impossible to better it under the present system of ownership. Many of the workers think they are working for the capitalist and a strike becomes a contest between labour and capital. This is much less likely to apply with the State as owners, and there is fair reason to expect that the relationship between labour and the community will be an improvement upon the relationship between labour and capital in the coalfields."(23)

In addition;

"Half a century of education had produced in the workers in the coalfields far more than a desire for the material advantages of higher wages and shorter hours. They have now, in many cases and to an ever increasing extent, a higher ambition of taking their due share and interest in the direction of the industry to the success of which they, too, are contributing."(24)

Therefore Sankey concluded that;

"It is true that in the minds of many men there is a fear that State ownerships may stifle incentive, but today we are faced in the coalfields with increasing industrial unrest and a constant strife between modern labour and modern capital.

I think that the danger to be apprehended from the certainty of the continuance of this strife in the coal mining industry outweighs the danger arising from the problematical fear of the risk of loss of incentive."⁽²⁵⁾

Justice Sankey then sided with the miners' representatives on the Commission in recommending a scheme of nationalisation. A scheme which included the setting up District Councils and a National Mining Council under a Minister of Mines with veto powers. Significantly, arrangements were to be built into the scheme prohibiting strike and other industrial action until the matters under dispute had been referred to and deliberated upon by the National Mining Council. Essentially this was a corporatist model underpinned by State ownership and aimed at regulating labour. In contrast a draft Parliamentary Bill proposed by the Miners' Federation had vested the mines not in the State but in the Mining Council and transferred all the powers of the Secretary of State for Mines to the Council. In turn the Mining Council was to have 50% of its members nominated by the Miners' Federation. Moreover the Council would have the power to take over and carry on iron, steel and other works carried on in connection with mining. As it was, the Miners' Federation nominations on the Commission accepted the Sankey proposals with minor

qualifications arguing for greater provision for workers' representation in the administration of the industry.⁽²⁶⁾ The majority of employers, on the other hand, produced a report arguing for continued private ownership, profit sharing and enhanced consultation with the workforce.⁽²⁷⁾ A fourth report from an independent employer proposed unification of the industry on a privately owned basis.⁽²⁸⁾ On the issue of wages and hours, the first Interim Report had shown the employers' side split. The colliery owners offering 1/6d. a day increase and a reduction in hours to a 7½ a day. The other three employers and Justice Sankey offering 2 shillings a day increase and a seven hour day. The Government agreed the hours and wages proposals of the Interim Report, while Bonar Law, for the Cabinet stated in the House of Commons that the Government would accept the final recommendations of the Commission. He then sent a letter to the Miners' Federation saying that "the Government are prepared to carry out in the spirit and in the letter" whatever proposals Sankey would make.⁽²⁹⁾ That was in March. By June the final Commission Report was published and in August the Government announced its decision not to accept the policy of nationalisation of the mines while agreeing to State purchase of the mineral rights. Having agreed the composition of the Commission the Government used the Commission's failure to reach a consensus as a reason for non-interference with the private ownership principle.

According to Saville⁽³⁰⁾ the Commission and the events surrounding it represented the classic case of political deceitfulness in modern British history. The whole episode indicating that when the chips were down political rulers would lie, procrastinate and manoeuvre in order to continue the desired policy of private

ownership. In this context one could also see the establishment of the Commission as part of the class struggle. At one moment the Commission and its deliberations could buy precious time for the Government in a period of crisis. In another instance the Commission, with its appearance of rational impartiality provided by the Chairman, could play a part in demobilising and disorganising the collectivity represented by the miners. At yet another level the Commission evidence signalled what sort of settlement the Miners' Federation was prepared to accept, while setting out the views of the contending forces. The Government could then appear to stand above the Commission evidence as neutral arbitrators and final decision takers acting in the national interest. A position underpinned by the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty.

In the end the decisions to increase miners' wages and cut hours, continue private ownership and purchase mineral rights, was determined by the strength of class forces and the condition of the economy. The Sankey wage increases and the profit sharing scheme proposed by the coal owners reflected the room to manoeuvre provided by the high profits and boom conditions in the immediate aftermath of the war. However, even the commitment to State purchase of the mineral rights was quietly dropped. A sign of the continuing strength and influence of the landowners. In its place the Mines (Working Facilities and Support) Act of 1923 increased mineowners' rights of access to land. This had the effect of softening the mineowners' opposition to the landowners.

The main thrust of the Sankey proposals pointed in a corporatist direction while the increase in wages and reduction in hours went beyond the mineowners' original position. By 1921, however, the

economy had gone into a recession. The years from 1923 to 1929 witnessing a partial recovery but unemployment still remaining high in the coal producing sector, in shipbuilding and in iron and steel. Therefore, the fourteen months from July 1924 to August 1925 show unemployment in the Northumberland Colliery Area never going below 9.5% of the insured populating, touching an unemployment high of 33.7% in June 1925 and averaging 18.6%.⁽³¹⁾

The response of the employers to these changed economic circumstances together with an insight into the condition of the coal industry six years after Sankey, can be found in evidence to the Samuel Commission set up in 1923.

(b) Evidence from the Samuel Commission

The majority of the Sankey Commission had agreed that the present system of ownership and working in the coal industry stands condemned."

But in the six years following this judgement little was done to change the system. Rational layout and economic working of the mines was still held back by the system of land ownership. The grouping of collieries into larger units was still slow, uncertain and unevenly achieved. A revealing piece of evidence from Sir Richard Redmayne illustrates the deficiencies of the system with an example from Northumberland.

"For eight years I managed the Seaton Delaval Collieries as Resident Manager. We had our own rolling stock, our own railway of eight and a-half miles to the shipping staith, and our own shipping staith, and we had to keep

all that up. The neighbouring colliery - there was only a barrier of 120 yards between us and them - were a large group raising about the same that we were raising. That was the Cramlington Collieries. We each raised about 3,000 tons a day. They had their railway running parallel with ours, they had their own rolling stock, and they had their shipping staiths. One railway, one set of rolling stock, and a considerable savings in wagons too, and one shipping staith (because they were not fully employed), would have served the whole thing, and would do today. More curious still, they had a chairman who was chairman of both companies, and some of the directors were the same on both companies; but they still remain unamalgamated."(32)

Meanwhile the technical backwardness of the industry was apparent. In 1924 for example 19% of British coal was cut by machine compared with 70% in the U.S.A. The figure for Northumberland being 28.3% of coal output cut by machine in 1924.

Added to this coal faced increasing competition from new forms of power notably oil while demand from home industries such as iron and steel had slumped in the depression. A system which had enriched the coal owners in the past was no longer able to do so. Faced with competition from abroad and from other fuels as well as the slump in the home market coal, capital saw only one solution, lower coal prices achieved by reducing wages and lengthening the working day. However, it was not only miners' wages that needed to be cut;

"The Association emphasise the view that the maintenance of railway, coal tipping and dock charges on coal traffic at their existing high level, in order to maintain the wages of railway and dock workers at a level entirely out of relation with that which is possible in the great producing industries is an injustice to the workers in those industries which calls for an immediate remedy." (33)

The remedy being a reduction in railway and dock workers' wages in order to cut coal transport and dock charges. Moreover, the coal owners claimed that high local authority rate charges were a function of a high local government wages bill therefore local government employers should accept wage cuts in order to ease rate costs on the coal industry. (34)

On the 30th June 1925, the coal owners gave a month's notice of their intention to end the existing wage agreement and replace it with one involving savage wage reductions. The Miners' Federation rejected the employers' proposals and the Baldwin Government intervened to mediate between the two sides and set up a Court of Inquiry. However, the miners refused to attend and asked for support from the rest of the trade union movement. The T.G.W.U. and the three railway unions therefore agreed to place a stop on all movements of coal unless the employers withdrew their proposals.

The Government, not being prepared for such a crisis, decided to play for time. On the 31st July, Baldwin met miners and T.U.C. representatives and informed them that the coal owners had agreed to suspend the notices. The government in its turn would guarantee a subsidy to the industry until 1st May 1926. In the meantime a Royal

Commission chaired by Sir Herbert Samuel would inquire into the industry. This time the Commission consisted of just four men: Sir Herbert Samuel, a former Liberal Cabinet Minister with extensive family connections in banking; Kenneth Lee, Chairman of Tootal, Broadhurst, Lee, a large cotton firm; Sir Herbert Lawrence, director of insurance companies, railway companies and Vickers Ltd; Sir William Beveridge, formerly a top civil servant and now director of the London School of Economics.

When the Commissioners issued their report on 10th March 1926, they saw no alternative to a reduction in mineworkers' wages;

What we contemplate is not a permanent lowering of wage standards but a temporary sacrifice by the men in the industry, other than the worst paid, in order to avoid the possible unemployment of hundreds of thousands of them ... Any material fall in wages will, we fully recognise, on the facts presented elsewhere in this Report, bring real wages at the present cost of living, below pre-war level for a large proportion of miners. This is a necessity to which other great industries have been driven. In the situation immediately confronting us it cannot be avoided for the coal industry except by making that industry a burden on the rest of the community ..."(35)

But it was not only wages that had to be cut. For according to the Commissioners;

"The subsidy [to the coal industry] should not be continued. In our view the principle is wrong ...

[Moreover] it has sometimes been suggested that collieries which are on the margin of profitability might receive some form of subsidy as a temporary measure to save them from closing. We cannot recommend that expedient. First, it would constitute in many cases a dole to the inefficient to the disadvantage of the efficient. Second, it is right that these collieries should bear the brunt of economic pressure."(36)

As far as public ownership was concerned the Commission came down against the idea;

We have seen, however, no scheme [of nationalisation] that will withstand criticism, we perceive grave economic dangers; and we did find no advantages which cannot be attained as readily, or more readily in other ways."(37)

More specifically the Commissioners pointed to a number of areas of concern. First that;

"The closing of uneconomic mines, always a matter of difficulty, would become far more difficult under nationalisation. There would be a strong temptation to draw upon the profits of the better mines rather than inflict the hardships and incur the resentment involved in such an operation."(38)

However, even more worrying was the division of responsibility between the State and the proposed self governing Councils that would run the industry. A division reflected in the contradictory position of the Minister of Mines;

"Like other Ministers he is responsible to Parliament ... But under this scheme the Minister is also to be the Chairman of the two bodies, by whom questions of wages and prices are to be settled. These bodies are not appointed or controlled by him; their members are almost all elected by independent constituencies. The Minister may therefore receive the instructions of Parliament but he has no power to give effect to them ... As it stands, the position in which the Minister for Mines is to be placed leaves him as the embodiment of the inconsistency of one authority being given the right to manage, another being left with the liability to pay ... We cannot afford to rely merely upon the hope that, out of a spirit of goodwill and public responsibility, the independent bodies which will conduct the industry will fully safeguard the interest of the Treasury." (39)

It was apparent that what was raising the anxiety of the Commissioners was the degree of autonomy proposed for the Production and Consumer Councils. An autonomy which allowed them to take investment and wage decisions without reference to Government and potentially left the Treasury to pick up at least part of the bill. Moreover, the Commissioners thought that the proposed institutional arrangements involved in the Federation's nationalisation scheme were biased towards labour and therefore tended to produce coal price increases in order to pay for wage claims. A factor not in the interests of industrial consumers who favoured cheap energy. Finally, the Commissioners argued that nationalisation of the mines alone would disrupt those combines that had already come into existence;

"But if mining were nationalised and the other associated industries remained in private hands, a new frontier would be drawn across the domain. Integrations that have already been effected would have, in fact, to be broken up."(40)

Having rejected the Labour movement's nationalisation plan, an alternative would have been direct "State control" of the mines. However, the Commissioners disingenuously objected to this move on the grounds that failed to satisfy the miners' demand for a decisive say in the running of the industry. More significantly they hesitated at bringing the State into an unmediated relationship with the miners.

In the end the Royal Commission was adamant that the mines should remain in the private sector. But having said that they noted the desirability of further amalgamations as a way of meeting the crisis. Then, having ruled out compulsion, and recognising that left to itself the coal industry would not take the necessary action to achieve further mergers and rationalisation, they recommended the setting up a Coal Commission to encourage and facilitate amalgamations. Broadly, the Coal Commission was to work by persuasion but also have reserve powers to buy up and transfer leases from owners "incapable of initiative" to those "willing to work the mineral on progressives lines."(41) In this context of overarching private combines the State was to play the necessary supportive role of acquiring all coal royalties.

THE GENERAL STRIKE

While the Samuel Commission was deliberating the Government was constructing an organisation to meet the expected challenge of labour.

Emergency bodies were created to keep transport on the road and ensure food delivery. A Civil Commissioner was appointed to each of the ten emergency administrative regions and under him various co-ordinating officers.

After September 1925 a network of 150 voluntary haulage committees composed of businessmen from the food and distributive trades was established. Thus one of the main elements of the emergency organisation would be in the hands of businessmen rather than civil servants.

In tandem with this organisation another formally private body was set up with Government approval. Known as the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, it was led at a national level by a collection of retired army generals, admirals and high ranking civil servants. In the localities the O.M.S. brought together businessmen and the concerned middle classes. The job of the O.M.S. being to enlist volunteers and train them as drivers or to do work vacated by strikers. All the while the O.M.S. stressing that it fully supported constitutional trade unionism.

These organisation arrangements simultaneously created a buffer between the Government and labour while allowing the army to protect strike breakers as opposed to strike breaking themselves. Rather than being everywhere the army and navy could concentrate in strategic areas and by their presence and numbers intimidate the population. By creating the O.M.S. and the Civil Commissioner central government could by-pass unreliable local authorities while co-opting town clerks and engineers on to Civil Commission staff to provide local knowledge. In the event relatively few local authorities in the North East refused to co-operate with the O.M.S. and Civil Commissioner. Jarrow

refused to provide facilities for the recruitment of volunteers while Blaydon U.D.C. refused;

"To be party to a strike breaking scheme designed to assist the Iron Heel of Capitalism and bring disaster to our own class."(42)

But these were exceptional instances for as Mason notes;

"the general strike came just too soon to be affected by the great labour takeover of local authorities in the North East which was a feature of the next decade."(43)

Having noted the government's preliminary moves what of the T.U.C. leadership? Throughout the months before the strike call their support for the miners had been grudging while no effort was spared to find a negotiated settlement. More generally the majority of the T.U.C. leadership supported the maintenance of the capitalist system although they had no coherent policies to deal with the depression and its consequences. They were therefore forced into a reactive response to the employers. In terms of dominant assumptions they believed in the "national interest" and thought that reasonableness on their side would produce reasonableness in response. Other strands of their thinking included the desire to separate the industrial from the political and limit trade unions to wages and conditions matters. Finally they realised that a successful general strike would have strengthened the left both in the trade union movement and on the General Council. Consequently they took every opportunity to announce their loyalty to the constitution and find a way of calling off the strike.

Inside the Conservative Cabinet the dominant group believed that the way out of the economic crisis was to take a strong line with labour. The Government therefore precipitated the general strike by breaking off negotiations with the T.U.C.

Once the strike was underway local newspapers exhorted people to go to volunteer centres. Articles appeared aimed at lowering the morale of the strikers and stiffening the resolve of those opposed to the strike. In the North East the Civil Commissioner made an appeal to the unemployed to volunteer and keep services going. Sir Alfred Palmer, of Palmers Shipbuilders, and chair of Gateshead magistrates, in sentencing a miner charged with circulating a newspaper likely to cause disaffection amongst the people summed up his feelings about troublesome workers;

"Why you and those associated with you don't go to Russia, I don't know... We don't want you. Nobody wants you. You are just a source of danger to the community, and the sooner you make up your minds to either reform or get away, the better for all concerned."⁽⁴⁴⁾

On the ground trade union activists established a central co-ordinating strike committee in Newcastle as well as councils of action, in fact an embryonic system of dual power. In reality the whole thing was a matter of daily improvisation supplemented by trial and error. Inter-union co-operation was uneven and difficult to achieve while the various union hierarchy were reluctant to surrender their independence. Having said that most people who were called out on strike came out while others unofficially walked out or wanted to stop work. Only where a middle class existed, usually in urban areas,

was a strike breaking organisation likely to succeed. In mining communities solidarity was intense with widespread picketing, disruption of transport and sporadic violence. For example on the 6th and 7th of May at Throckley traffic was stopped and buses stoned. On the 9th May bus services in the Ashington area were suspended. On the 12th ten Stakeford miners appeared in court charged with attempting to stop and burn a newspaper van. On the 10th May the Flying Scotsman express was unintentionally derailed at Cramlington in mistake for a coal train.⁽⁴⁵⁾ As a result eight local miners received severe and exemplary prison sentences. One of the jailed miners recalls the conditions in which he lived and worked and the motivations behind his actions;

"I was getting 6s 9½d. per shift, and a 40% reduction in pay had been threatened by the mine-owners. The conditions were wet, with foul air. There was no annual or statutory holiday pay. There were no pit-head baths. We lived in hovels. The toilets were earth closets and water was drawn from a standpipe 30 feet from the house. On the 6th May 1926, a meeting of the Cramlington Lodge was held in the Miners' Institute. One of the lodge officials ended the meeting with A.J. Cook's slogan: 'Stop the wheels turning'. Someone in the meeting called for them all to come back after dinner and have a rail up to stop the blackleg coal trains going through. The men returned about 1.30pm, and just as they all met they saw blackleg platelayers working in their 'plus fours' on the line. The miners stoned and chased them away. Then

someone called out: 'Come on lads, we'll have a rail out...'

Our aim was to stop blackleg coal trains only, and for this we have no regrets. We were on starvation wages and fighting to preserve ourselves and our families from further degradation."(45)

However, the stiff jail sentences and imprisonment at Maidstone Prison was not the end of the matter. An organisation called the "International Class war Prisoners' Aid" campaigned for the men's freedom. On their release;

"Meetings in London, Newcastle, Dudley and Cramlington welcomed us home. I remember the great welcome we received at Poplar Town Hall, then at Newcastle by a demonstration led by Will Lawther, followed by a packed-out meeting at Cramlington Co-op Hall and finally at Dudley Co-op Hall where we were presented with I.C.W.P.A. silver medals."(47)

Certainly these recollections illustrate the spontaneity of action. Moreover, the imprisoned miners saw themselves not only as Northumberland miners but also as part of an international working class. The presentation of medals honouring and recognising their actions and sacrifice at the same time established them as examples to be emulated and remembered. But what is recalled is a defensive, militant and heroic struggle whose immediate aim was maintenance of living standards. This I suspect was how the majority of working class participants understood the situation although a minority hoped for a revolutionary overthrowing of the state and capital.

Had the strike gone on for three or four more weeks or had the government acted differently working class perceptions and understanding might have changed and developed in a more radical direction. A successful general strike would have undermined the government's economic policy, raised the confidence of the working class generally, strengthened the left and created a new political situation. It would also have legitimated industrial action for political ends. But it was not to be. Instead the abandonment of the general strike by the General Council, the subsequent miners' lockout and defeat of the Miners' Federation had a number of consequences. First widespread class demoralisation and unwillingness to take industrial action set in. The position of the right wing and centre on the General Council was strengthened while the Miners' Federation and Minority Movement was marginalised. Before 1926 the dominant ideology of the Trade Union movement had been an uncomfortable mixture of labourism and syndicalism. After 1926 labourism held sway stressing constitutionalism, the separation of the industrial and political spheres and the need for co-operation between labour and capital. Lastly, since the Miners' Federation constituted a key union blocking the governments's policy of economic non-intervention and wage cutting, their defeat opened the way to a deepening of the politics of reaction. As far as the coal industry was concerned those elements of the ruling block favouring state non-intervention were strengthened and nationalisation put off the agenda for another twenty years.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING THE INTER-WAR CRISIS

(1) The Neo-Liberal Solution

The strategy of the coal owners for dealing with the crisis, as indicated by evidence to the Samuel Commission, was clear. The industry had to stand on its own two feet. Unprofitable pits should close and Government subsidy cease. In order to increase coal exports, cheap coal was called for and to pay for this miners' wages would have to be cut. Additionally the men would be asked to work longer hours. National agreements would be replaced by district negotiation thus allowing the coal companies to vary wages and conditions from district to district. But it was not only the coal owners who pursued such a wage cutting strategy. It was a common policy of industrial capital throughout the North East.

Apart from these strategies other responses included mass lay offs and short time working particularly in the steel, shipbuilding and coalmining industries. A steel worker recalling that;

"A works would be idle for a month, and the men would be on the dole. Suddenly the news would come round, 'the mill is going to start, don't know how long'. And they would start producing tinsplate again for maybe two months. Then they closed down again. We called them 'umbrella plants' in that they were opening and closing."(48)

Then because of shrunken demand companies moved to reduce capacity by closing plant. This move was often associated with mergers and amalgamations. In the case of shipbuilding the National Shipbuilders Security Ltd was formed with the backing of the Bank of

England. The N.S.S. used its funds to buy then close down other yards. Whole firms disappeared, as well as individual yards within bigger groups. By 1937 a million tons of capacity had gone, a reduction of a third.

The effect of these strategies was to leave whole communities surplus to requirements. In coal mining districts unemployment reached new peaks. In shipbuilding the closure of Palmers shipyard promoted Wilkinson to refer to Jarrow as the "town that was murdered."

The Conservative Government was not alone in supporting policies of restructuring for capital. In May 1929 a Labour Government took office determined to pursue a policy of continuity. The implications of this course of action were made clear by Ramsey MacDonald in an address to a meeting of the Oxford Union on June 5th 1930;

"I have deliberately, and will continue deliberately, to proceed on the basis of a process of rationalisation in industry, which must for weeks increase unemployment figures. I have to do this in the interests of the country."(49)

According to Hannington, the newly appointed Minister for Unemployment, J.H. Thomas, took an active role in promoting this strategy;

"He called conferences of employers to persuade them of the values of amalgamation into combines, and of re-organisation and rationalisation in production. In the name of the Government he offered help to employers who took his advice, by securing credit on favourable terms, with State backing for loans advanced. In this

connection the Bankers' Industrial Development was formed by the Bank of England with Government approval for the purpose of financing rationalisation. He addressed Chambers of Commerce on the need for increasing the competitive ability of the British capitalist class for the defeat of their rivals in the struggle for world markets."(50)

As the surplus population increased how to manage and maintain it became a matter of Government concern. Maintenance payments, based on the insurance principal, kept the unemployed and their dependants at subsistence level. In the year before the formation of the 1929 Labour Government the Conservatives had strictly applied the "not genuinely seeking work" rule to eliminate 285,786 cases from benefit. But while the new Labour Government, in the face of working class pressure, replaced this clause with benefit disqualification for "refusing a suitable offer of employment" it adhered to all the mean administrative measures of its predecessors. For example, "suitable employment" was defined by the Employment Exchange Officer while the applicant, to be eligible for benefit, had to agree to follow any written instructions issued by him. Applicants for Poor Law relief had first to show they were able bodied and willing to work by performing "test and task work" such as stone breaking or wood-chopping. Moreover, each Poor Law applicant was treated on a discretionary case by case basis rather than being entitled to a certain scale of relief as a right.

In August 1931 the Labour Government endorsed the findings of the May Committee and embarked upon cuts in unemployment benefit and increases in worker contributions to the scheme. This was quickly

followed by "means testing" in order to qualify for benefit allowance. The result being to remove people from benefit entitlement and shift the responsibility of maintaining them on to family and friends.

Underpinning the cuts in benefit, the means testing, and the support for an insurance based as opposed to a non-contributory payments based scheme was a Government commitment to financial orthodoxy and balanced books. Many commentators suggesting that this orthodoxy was itself a reflection of the dominance of banking capital during the inter-war years.

Apart from efforts to reduce benefits other schemes to deal with the surplus population were tried and others rejected. The option of developing large scale public works was ruled out as being too expensive. On the other hand labour was encouraged to transfer from the "distressed areas". In the six years ending December 1933, 19,533 juveniles (8,338 boys and 11,144 girls) transferred from the coalfields of South Wales, Durham, Northumberland and Lancashire. The majority of the girls (90%) being sent into domestic service. According to the Special Area Commissioner, Sir Malcolm Stewart;

"Transference of individuals and families out of the special areas must in my view be regarded as one of the essential measures of relief. My policy is, therefore, aimed at making clear the desirability of encouraging the younger persons to take every opportunity of obtaining employment outside the areas."(51)

Meanwhile the Samuel Commission has noted that although there was;

"no demand for miners in the Dominions many of them might make useful agriculturalists, and would be welcome there in that capacity."(52)

This back to the land strategy now became official government policy with the Unemployment Assistance Board and Land Settlement Association collaborating to encourage the establishment of indigenous small holdings worked by the unemployed.

At the same time the State moved to support voluntary organisations such as the National Council of Social Service develop a network of welfare and occupational training centres for the unemployed. From Hannington's account the training element was haphazard and low level confirming the view that these centres had more to do with diverting the unemployed into official channels. Keeping them off the streets in places which not only monitored and categorised but also provided a routine of work. The significance of these centres only being fully realised with the passing of the 1934 Unemployment Act which compelled the unemployed to engage in work tasks as a condition for the receipt of benefit from the Unemployment Assistance Board.

The inter-war period then, witnessed industrial restructuring, cuts in wages and punitive welfare measures. Moreover, in the midst of the crisis an ideological offensive was taking place designed to convince popular imagination that "capitalism is the finest system that human ingenuity can devise."(53) One element in that offensive being the propaganda of the Economic League, an organisation directed by the likes of Lord Gainford, Clive Cookson and W.L. Runnciman, a director of Blyth Drydocks and Shipbuilding Co. Ltd.(54)

Then as a parting gesture of political retribution pressure from the Tory constituencies forced the Government to introduce the 1927 Trades Dispute Act aimed at restricting trade union activity.

(2) The New Politics of Modernisation and Class Incorporation

The defeat of the miners while simultaneously deepening and prolonging the politics of reaction also entrenched the right in the T.U.C. and the Labour Party and opened a space whereby the Labour right could contemplate co-operation with capital. Alongside co-operation went a rejection of large scale militancy and a recognition that despite the crisis, capitalism was not about to collapse. Citrine, for example, observing that;

"the system which we call capitalism has changed its form in the last 100 years tremendously and has adapted itself with remarkable flexibility to changing conditions. That it will change even more in the next few generations cannot be doubted."⁽⁵⁵⁾

Given this continuance a solution to the crisis had to be found within the existing system. The new role for the T.U.C. was therefore spelt out in the General Council's Report to the 1928 T.U.C. Congress. According to this the trade union movement should;

"say boldly that not only is it concerned with the prosperity of industry, but that it is going to have a voice as to the way industry is carried on, so that it can influence the new developments that are taking place. The ultimate policy of the movement can find more use for an efficient industry than a derelict one, and the unions

can use their power to promote and guide the scientific reorganisation of the industry as well as to obtain material advantages from that reorganisation."(56)

In short the trade unions should assist reorganisation in the hope of raising the living standards of their members and creating long term general prosperity. Moreover, by showing a willingness to co-operate with capital the trade unions sought to influence outcomes and gain status.

But it was not only a pragmatic acceptance of defeat in the general strike which promoted the new mood of co-operation. A number of other factors were at work. First the return to the gold standard of 1925 had penalised the export industries while favouring finance capital. This policy, combined with high unemployment and insecurity notably in department I industries⁽⁵⁷⁾ convinced many leading trade unionists that there was an over-riding industrial interest as such and that labour and employer shared a common concern in overcoming the economic crisis.

Second, dominant groups within the trade union movement were rethinking capitalism. As Jacques⁽⁵⁸⁾ notes capitalism was now conceived of as an evolving system. There was now an increasing separation between ownership and control reflected in the growth of a strata of professional managers. Competition, another distinguishing feature of capitalism, was being replaced by monopoly concentration and centralisation. Capitalism would therefore evolve into State Monopoly Capitalism which for some became equated with socialism.

Within this problematic the old exploitative irrational capitalism was naturally being replaced by a rational system.



Socialism did not have to be struggled for. The challenge now was to get labour's voice heard and put labour on an equal footing with capital in the corridors of power.

Within capital it was large and new capital such as the big international science based industries like chemicals, rubber and oil and new industries such as electrical engineering and cars that regarded the co-operation of labour as critical to the success of rationalisation. It was therefore this section of capital which initiated the Mond-Turner talks with the T.U.C. aimed at facilitating rationalisation and drawing labour into an alliance with big capital. Ultimately these discussions and the agreed joint reports were rejected by the Federation of British Industries and the National Confederation of Employers Organisations. Organisations dominated by small, medium and old capital in staple industries where low profits and labour intensive production was the norm.

However, despite the collapse of the Mond-Turner initiative the fact of the talks taking place at all was symptomatic of a change of attitude by a section of capital. By the mid 1930's there was a dawning recognition amongst capitalists both nationally and locally that the old neo-liberal policies not only depressed demand and made matters worse but also threatened social peace and stability. Given the massive amount of capital still tied up in the region local capital had an immediate interest in finding new solutions to the crisis. Some of these solutions finding reflection in the organisations set up and the policies they elaborated.

In 1925 the Tyneside Development Conference came into being. The Times Trade and Engineering Supplement of 1934 saying that:

"It was established with the support of such local corporations and urban district councils as were empowered to contribute financially, the Tyne Improvement Commission, the public utility companies and some of the large landowners in the district, in short, those interests that were most likely to benefit by a revival of industry."(59)

Its key purpose was the attraction of new industries, publicizing Tyneside products and acting as a clearing house for inquiries about sites for new works, facilities, rates and labour supply on Tyneside. After 1935 the Conference became the Tyneside Industrial Development Board and as well as national capital it was considered that;

"Foreign manufacturers must be attracted and an extensive advertising campaign to bring before the world the facilities and advantages on Tyneside was undertaken."(60)

Part of Tyneside's advantage, it was said, being a ready supply of willing and adaptable labour.

In 1934 the Special Areas Commissioners experimented with the establishment of the North East Trading Estates Ltd, the most significant estate being located at Team Valley, Gateshead. Then in 1935 the Commissioners assisted in the formation of the North East Development Board under the chairmanship of Lord Ridley. The stated aim of N.E.D.B. was to facilitate;

"the exchange of opinions and concerted action on non-party lines by representatives of a great variety of interests who have no other common meeting ground."(61)

Those interests included local and county councils, M.P.'s, trade unionists and local capital. All represented on the N.E.D.B. council. Clearly the N.E.D.B. was the organisational expression of a cross class alliance formed with the intention of elaborating a consensus on economic and social policy. Part of the ideological cement holding this alliance together was an appeal to regional sentiment based on a perception of common suffering during the inter-war depression. The solution to the crisis involving all the key interests constituting the region pulling together.

Within the N.E.D.B. council it was capital which took the lead in initiating policy. However the main role of the organisation was that of a pressure group seeking to influence central government and shape the operations of the North East Trading Estates, the North East Housing Association and local authorities. Meanwhile in terms of policy the central feature to emerge from the N.E.D.B. was a common agreement on the necessity of state involvement in the control of industrial location especially since the 'new' inter-war industries had been mostly located in the South East. This call for state 'control' marking a recognition that market forces alone could not guarantee that new industries would set up in the North East.

In 1940 the N.E.D.B. was dissolved and in its place a new organisation, the Northern Industrial Group, was established in 1943. Fogarty (62) suggesting that the reason for the dissolution being that the N.E.D.B. was "overweighted on the side of the local authorities" and hence not open enough to the needs of capital. According to the

Benwell Community Development Project⁽⁶³⁾ the Northern Industrial Group was meant to correct this imbalance to one favouring industrial capital. Whatever the reason for the dissolution, the Northern Industrial Group developed and elaborated the tentative policies of the N.E.D.B. while continuing to seek support from labour and local authority interests.

A pamphlet published by the Northern Industrial Group in 1946 described the origins of the Group as follows:-

"Early in 1943 a few people met privately under the chairmanship of Lord Ridley to try and estimate what the post-war position of the North East was likely to be, especially in regard to employment and industry and to consider what might be done to prevent a recurrence of those conditions which developed after the war of 1914-18 and which culminated in the North East becoming a 'Depressed Area'." ⁽⁶⁴⁾

What then occurred was that;

"This small body which was the nucleus of the Group set out its views, which were then referred to other industrialists and to a number of leaders of the Trade Union movement in the North East for their comment and support." ⁽⁶⁵⁾

Subsequently the Northern Industrial Group developed into a strong lobby, financed by local capital, with powerful research panels covering many branches of industry. In 1944 the North East Development Association was formed with the Group operating as its industrial component while retaining its independent existence. The

membership of the Group in 1946 encompassing all the leading sectors of capital in the North East with Viscount Ridley acting as Chairman and Clive Cookson Vice Chairman.

The policies of the Group were set out in two documents, namely "Considerations Affecting Post War Employment in the North East"⁽⁶⁶⁾ published in 1943 and their "Memorandum on the Government White Paper on Employment Policy"⁽⁶⁷⁾ published in 1944. Taken together both documents represented a new policy direction uniting the various regional interests and included calls for;

- (a) Continuity of employment in each part of the country following the shift from a war to a peace economy.
- (b) Any deficiencies in employment being met by schemes of public works.
- (c) A stable level of employment in heavy industry.
- (d) Retention of population and an abandonment of labour transference outside the region.
- (e) Clearance of derelict buildings to encourage development.
- (f) Amendment of housing legislation to assist labour mobility within the region.
- (g) Building houses for business executives in order to promote the growth of industry.
- (h) Diversification of industry in order to ensure adequate employment.
- (i) Government finance to help the conversion from war to peace production.
- (j) Government measures to assist industry secure overseas markets.

- (k) Government loans to industry at low rates of interest.
- (l) Government action to speed up the pace of factory construction in the region and encourage new industries to locate in the North East.

This programme then was very much inter-related, the call for new and diversified industry implying the retention and reassembly of labour in new locations. For capital the new regional programme offered the opportunity to expand sales and income, for labour it held out the prospect of full employment and, via N.I.G. and the N.E.D.A., the chance to influence policy.

Finally, the Memorandum of 1944 proposed that the Northern Industrial Group and the North East Development Association acting jointly with regional branches of Government Departments would be best placed to implement the recommendations embodied in the 1943 and 1944 documents. The basis for this claim being that they constituted broadly representative organisations acting in the regional interest.

By 1944, therefore, the regional bourgeoisie was advocating State intervention in the region and the economy in contrast to earlier pronouncements about the sanctity of the free market. Clearly Lord Ridley and other leading figures had concluded, from their experience of running the war economy, that State intervention did not necessarily equal socialism.

The new programme, by addressing the need of labour for employment and by incorporating labour representation via N.I.G. and the N.E.D.A., sought to harness labour support for a project of regional modernisation directed by the regional bourgeoisie.

CLASS POSITIONING AND CAPITAL DIVERSIFICATION

By the 1930's many of the most significant members of the bourgeoisie had followed the lead of Ridley and Cookson and moved out of Newcastle to country estates in Northumberland and Durham. The estates they left behind and the few undeveloped West city sites providing a base for several emerging building companies such as William Leech and J.T. Bell.

The Samuel Commission, it will be recalled, had recommended that the difficulties besetting the coal industry could only be solved by amalgamations. To implement this policy a Coal Mines Reorganisation Commission was set up and as anticipated the effect of amalgamation was to concentrate still further the ownership and control of industry in the hands of a small number of coal owners. The P.E.P. report of 1934 summarising the position as follows;

"In nearly every district it is probably true to say that three quarters of the production is concentrated in less than half the total number of pits, and in the hands of less than a quarter of the total number of colliery owners."(68)

As far as Northumberland and Durham were concerned twelve families, including the Cooksons and Ridleys, were directors and major share holders in coal companies employing a workforce of 60,000 and producing 20 million tons per annum or 45% of the entire output of the two counties.

Further State support for the coal owners came with the 1930 Coal Mines Act which allowed the owners to create district cartels for fixing the price and output of coal for each colliery. This was

followed up in 1936 by a central selling scheme established with the intention of raising prices. In such circumstances it was not surprising that profits and dividends rose. Yet the overall strategy of the coal companies was one of minimal re-investment in mining. Instead the profits from coal were re-directed towards more profitable sectors. This process of capital diversification already apparent in the 1930's was to become even more marked in the post-war period.

At the same time second and third generation family members were moving into the new consumer goods industries and public utilities, into banking and insurance, investment holding companies, property companies and building societies and professions such as stockbroking and law which were orientated towards money management. For example, J.W.B. Pease sat on the board of Lloyds Bank in the 1920's became chairman for 23 years and was later joined by Lord Ridley. While Ridley himself became a director of the Yorkshire Insurance Group and the Newcastle and Gateshead Gas Co., with his son, the fourth Viscount, becoming a director of Tyne Tees Television, the Northern Rock Building Society, Barclays Bank and the Swan Hunter Group.

Likewise the 1920's and 30's saw a growth in Investment Trust formation, their funds swollen from coal profits.

As capital flowed into the finance capital sector significant family members entered the professions best placed to handle the transfer of funds and provide specialist advice. Of particular importance here was the solicitors firm of Dickinson, Miller and Turnbull. This company, whose partners were related through marriage to the Joicey family, played a central role in managing investment funds and developing owner occupation through their professional and directorship involvement with the Northern Rock Building Society.

Owner occupation in turn generated an increasing flow of conveyancing fees for the firm.

By the late 30's and early 40's therefore the regional bourgeoisie was both diversifying its interests and positioning itself to take advantage of a modernisation policy it had played a key part in defining.

CONCLUSION

Prior to the first world war, the economy of the North East, although centred on coal, steel, shipbuilding and heavy engineering, was buoyant. Much of this upsurge of activity being based on the production of armaments.

Outside the northern region, new consumption based industries were establishing themselves in the South East while on a world scale the competitive position of British industry was starting to be undermined by the rise of new productive forces in other countries notably the U.S.A. and Germany. Consequently much needed capital for investment went where it could get a higher rate of profit either to the consumption goods sector of the South East or abroad or to the colonies of the empire. This export of capital serving to starve the peripheral regions such as the North East of investment and lock their economies into a spiral of disadvantage in relation to competitor regions.

After 1918 and the end of the war, the British economy experienced a short boom. Then comes 1921 and the start of a deep and lasting over-production crisis. This crisis mostly being centred on the investment goods industries but having knock on effects by reducing demand for consumption goods as investment sector workers are made unemployed. However, unemployment is unevenly spread across the

national space reflecting the reliance of certain regions on the investment goods sector. In the North East for example male unemployment in the Northumberland Colliery area reached 33.7% in June 1925.(69)

In 1919 Sankey had recommended nationalisation of the mines in order to ensure a supply of cheap fuel, reverse under investment and ameliorate labour demands within the industry as well as damp down wider class action. This essentially corporatist recommendation, which included conciliation and no strike arrangements, was not, however, acceptable to the government, to the coal owners or to capital in general. However, the miners were not be confronted directly but quietened by wage increases and shorter hours.

By 1926 the solution of capital to the crisis, as illustrated by the employers' response to the Samuel Commission, was to call for wage cuts and the lengthening of working hours. State intervention in the form of the nationalisation of the coal industry was rejected while subsidies to the industry were abolished. On the other hand a coal commission to encourage further amalgamation was established. A proposal which favoured big coal capital. The neo-liberal solution going further still with its emphasis on punitive and restrictive welfare policies and the encouragement of surplus labour to move out of the "distressed areas".

The welfare reforms enacted between 1885 and 1914 together with a series of electoral reforms starting in the 1860's enfranchised ever more of the working class and helped incorporate that class into the nation while providing legitimacy for the state. Therefore by 1926 the British state was underpinned and armoured by institutional democracy, an amalgam of coercion plus consent with consent being the

operative factor. In this context the economic demands of the general strikers although threatening to spill over into a wider political challenge are contained and fail to develop into a hegemonic strategy which can transform the consent of the majority to the rule of capital.

The defeat of the general strike strengthened the right wing and reformist elements within the working class. At the same time significant factions within capital recognised the dysfunction of neo-liberal policies and sought to elaborate a modernisation strategy which among other things called for state intervention, the maintenance of "traditional industries", a stop to labour transference and the diversification of industry. This new strategy is then given organised form with the setting up of regional organisations such as the North East Development Board, the Northern Industrial Group and the North East Development Association. Significantly N.E.D.A. is a broadly based group which includes labour representation reflecting the strategy of important sections of local capital to "bring labour on board".

By the late thirties and forties the writing was on the wall for the coal industry. Family members from the coal dynasties were expanding their interests and taking on directorships in other areas such as banking, finance and insurance. Coal would eventually become nationalised but the coal owners were already attempting to direct and shape the economy of the future.

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- (60) Quoted in Carney and Hudson; Capital, Politics and Ideology. The North East of England, 1870-1946. Antipode, p.68.
- (61) Ibid. page 70.
- (62) See M.P. Fogarty; Plan Your Own Industries, O.U.P. 1947.
- (63) See "The Making of a Ruling Class", Benwell Community Project, 1978, p.62.
- (64) Quoted in Carney and Hudson; Capital, Politics and Ideology. The North East of England, 1870-1946. Antipode, p.73.
- (65) Ibid.
- (66) Northern Industrial Group 'Considerations Affecting Post War Employment in the North East', 1943. Held at the Literary and Philosophical Society, Westgate Road, Newcastle.
- (67) Northern Industrial Group 'Memorandum on the Government White Paper on Employment Policy, 1944. Held at the Literary and Philosophical Society, Westgate Road, Newcastle.

- (68) Quoted in M. Heineman. Britain's Coal, p.108. Labour Research Dept. 1944.
- (69) see the "Royal Commission on the Coal Trade 1925" Appendix 2, Table E for monthly unemployment percentages in the coalfield districts.

CHAPTER THREE

ASPECTS OF MODERNISATION

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter noted the break between the neo-liberal policies of the 1920's and the policies of the late 1930's which, like Keynesianism, were intended to save capital from itself.

This chapter focusses on the modernisation of South East Northumberland which centred on the development of Cramlington New Town. A significant feature of Cramlington being that it subordinated public investment to private capital.

At one level Cramlington represented an investment project which contributed to the evolution of Leech and Bellway builders into big national companies. At another Cramlington signified the transformation of a coalfield area into a locality containing a much more varied workforce with many of these workers buying their own homes. A pre-condition for this massive extension of home ownership implied by the building of Cramlington being a general rise in working class income and availability of mortgage credit.

Lastly, this chapter has a wider purpose which is to say something about the character of the coal industry as it was transformed from a privatised to a nationalised concern. In addition Cramlington is placed in the context of the various 'Plans for Coal' and regional development strategy while the continuing influence and importance of Lord Ridley is indicated.

1. THE POLITICS OF NATIONALISATION

The Nationalisation Bill of 1919, re-introduced in 1923, 1924 and 1925, in which Coal's hand was paramount, gave to a National

Mining Council and to District and Local (Pit) Mining Councils the real power of management of the mines. Half the places on the National and District Councils being reserved for Federation representatives and half the members of the pit councils being elected annually by miners at the pit. Moreover, under the terms of the Bill, no compensation was to be paid to landowners for royalties and wayleaves while the mines themselves would be valued on annual output in the five years preceding the war and compensation to the mineowners made by the issue of state mines stock.

In contrast to this system of joint control involving the Federation and others appointed by the Crown, the Sankey recommendations made the various councils purely advisory. The real power of decision and policy making resting with the Minister of Mines and the district chairmen and vice-chairmen appointed by him plus the numerous pit managers. Sankey therefore offered the Federation a voice but no real power or responsibility. It was these recommendations which the miners' representatives on the Commission, at the urging of the Fabian Sidney Webb, were prepared to accept. Additionally, the Sankey Commission proposed that royalties would be valued and purchased at a "total maximum sum" to be fixed by Parliament. Barry⁽¹⁾ therefore concludes that the "Sankey Report offered a smaller degree of industrial democracy than the Federation Bill."

By 1925 the joint T.U.C., Labour Party and Miners' Federation Memorandum to the Samuel Commission was suggesting that the coal industry be transformed from simply an extractive industry to a nationalized energy producing and coal utilising industry.

"We suggest that the coal industry should become an organisation for mining coal, manufacturing electrical power on a very large scale, making both coke and smokeless fuel, and producing, in addition, gas, fuel, oils, ammonium compounds, chemical base materials for tars and other by-products. We propose that this transformed industry should be nationally owned."⁽²⁾

In the event rather than an energy and chemical conglomerate as envisaged in 1925 nationalisation draw a boundary around coal.

Yet apart from objecting to nationalisation in principle the Samuel Commission took exception to the autonomy of the proposed Production and Consumer Councils that would run the industry on the grounds that this autonomy would undermine ministerial responsibility and parliamentary sovereignty.

By 1944 the General Council of the T.U.C. issued its "Interim Report on Post-War Reconstruction."⁽³⁾ This report opposed worker participation in the regulation of public industry while supporting normal trade union functioning within the nationalised industries and the establishment of consultative works councils covering matters not falling within the scope of normal negotiating machinery. The task of management was to rest with full-time professional administrators accountable to their superiors. At the highest level, board members were to be selected solely on the basis of their competence to administer the industry and the board would be accountable to the public through a Minister responsible to Parliament. The T.U.C. could nominate a list of board candidates for selection by the Minister but any such candidates should, on appointment to the board, relinquish trade union position and responsibilities. No places were reserved on

the board for T.U.C. candidates nor was the Minister required by law to appoint T.U.C. nominations.

Broadly, the T.U.C. gave three reasons for rejecting workers' control or representation. First, the need to maintain trade union independence which otherwise would be compromised by workers on the board. Second, worker representatives could not simultaneously serve the Minister and the trade union. Third, Parliament through the appropriate Minister, must have final control over policy since Parliament represents the general will.

In short the "Interim Report on Post-War Reconstruction" adopted a position which tied the nationalised coal industry to the State, limited the role of the trade unions to their traditional concerns of bargaining over wages and conditions and policing health and safety, reduced workers' control to consultation and exalted the role of the professional. Such a position represented the victory of Fabianism⁽⁴⁾ over earlier guild socialist and syndicalist conceptions which kept the State at arm's length and stressed workers' autonomy and control. In so far as Sankey had approved a very similar formulation to the 1944 recommendations it was a position which could be supported by sectors of the establishment.

Yet only some of even these modest proposals were embodied in the 1946 Coal Mines Nationalisation Act. The Minister of Fuel and Power was able to appoint the Board and give "directives of a general character" in "Matters affecting the national interest". However, the practice of accepting T.U.C. nominations for appointment to the Board was not included in the Act. Moreover, the first draft of the Bill did not propose even consultative machinery. It was only as a result of Conservative pressure that Section 46 was later included which

imposed a duty on the Board of consulting with the trade unions to set up machinery for the settlement of labour disputes and also for consultation on health and safety and other matters.

In practice managers retained the right to make policy and take decisions while consultation rarely took place prior to decisions being made and was usually concerned with implementation. Moreover, the unions and workers were seldom allowed the detailed information necessary to form considered judgements and articulate alternatives.

The trade unions could use the obligation on the Board to consult as a delaying mechanism. They could ask the Board to supply information but it was at the Board's discretion whether it provided such information.

In the immediate aftermath of nationalisation Shinwell as Minister for Fuel and Power asked the N.U.M. to submit nominations for Labour Directors of the Board at National and District level. The nominations were not, however, accepted and the N.U.M. General Secretary Ebby Edwards was appointed to the Board. In the divisions a large number of N.U.M. district officials were appointed mostly to labour management and industrial relations positions. Then, the ladder plan, a scheme aimed at giving a proportion of the annual juvenile recruits a chance of promotion to management was introduced. This meant that over time management was increasingly made up of the sons of miners who had come up the ladder. The in-house nature of the training producing a strong identification with the industry and the Board.

From the start of nationalisation senior N.U.M. officials in the North East became closely involved in the management structures of the N.C.B. some even joining the divisional and national board. These

officials came to share much of the Coal Board's ideology as did many local M.P.'s and councillors. The divide between capital and labour was displaced by a discourse that spoke of working for our industry on behalf of the people. Labour M.P.'s such as Lord Robens could now move effortlessly from his position as M.P. for Wansbeck and then Blyth to the chair of the Coal Board in 1961.

This patronage system at the level of locality was reflected at national level. On the one hand, appointments to the National Board were in the gift of the Minister, on the other trade union appointees were required to relinquish all trade union responsibilities. These two factors ensuring a functional Board of like minded individuals. In any case by 1957 Will Paynter then President of the South Wales miners was complaining that;

"Progressively trade union men appointed to the Board are subordinated to control by production executives ... a process accelerated since the Fleck Report."⁽⁵⁾

Hanson⁽⁶⁾ confirming that the report had brought the industry under a much more centralised and authoritative managerial structure.

As early as 1941 Picture Post was asking what kind of Britain are we fighting for? In answer it quoted a miner saying;

"It is security against war and exploitation by man or country."⁽⁷⁾

The solution to exploitation, squalor and poverty being sought in planning and nationalisation. Three years later the T.U.C. Interim Report on Post War Reconstruction gave as reasons for nationalisation and public control;

"Full employment; price stability; the protection of the people, either as workers or consumers against exploitation; the equitable distribution of income and economic opportunity and the promotion of national development and national security."(8)

Moreover nationalisation would ensure that;

"industrial efficiency serves its proper purpose of improving the standard of life of the community."(9)

Clearly more was being expected of nationalisation than could be delivered given the form of nationalisation and its insertion in a dominant capitalist social formation.

By 1945 the Reid Committee⁽¹⁰⁾ reported that the coal industry lacked investment and modern equipment, relied on a largely untrained workforce and had a lower O.M.S. than any comparable coal industry in the world. As for the coal owners they were criticised both for their individualism and for taking "the short term view". Furthermore, the problem of co-operation between capital and labour was the most difficult the industry had to face with attitudes being coloured by past history, future hopes and a lack of trust between the parties. However, the necessary large scale reconstruction of the mines could not, the Committee concluded;

"be satisfactorily carried out by the industry organised as it is today."(11)

Despite the Committee recommending compulsory amalgamation rather than nationalisation a clear coincidence of view can be noted with both labour and progressive capital recognising that the coal

industry could not continue in the old way. Nationalisation was a pre-condition for investment in and modernisation of the industry which, insofar as it provided a cheap energy source and maintained worker subordination, was acceptable to capital in general.

On the 1st January 1947, the Coal Industry was nationalised and the N.C.B. flag hoisted at all the nation's pits. A miner remembering the day with these words;

"The manager came to a point in the colliery and he said, 'This is your colliery'. That was the beginning and end of it all, because nothing was further from the truth. We still had to work for a living. The manager was the same manager, he would still make the agreements, good or bad." (12)

Clearly democracy stopped at the pit gates. In the workplace the miner was still a wage labourer whose capacity to influence Coal Board policy, investment decisions, choice of manager or day to day operations was limited or non-existent. But for some nationalisation equalled socialism or was a step towards socialism, for others it was an end in itself. Macmillan, however, accurately recorded that;

"This is not socialism it is State Capitalism." (13)

His worry being that under these circumstances lack of participatory mechanisms would inhibit industrial harmony.

2. The Coal Industry

In 1947 the Coal Board took over nearly 1,500 collieries and over 800 separate companies. The high level of Government compensation at £164 million, in exchange for a rundown and

technically backward industry, pacified the coal owners and made nationalisation tolerable. In addition, the prospect of a steady supply of cheap fuel making possible low production costs satisfied manufacturing capital. For the newly elected Labour government nationalisation placed the coal industry within the sphere of the State and ministerial control. This in turn subjected the industry to the other social and macro-economic objectives such as price stability and the defeat of inflation.

The war years had witnessed a shortage of manpower in the pits necessitating both "Essential Works Orders" requiring miners to stay on the job and the drafting in of "Bevin Boys" to augment mining labour. However, throughout the war years manpower shortages persisted, absenteeism rose, materials were in short supply and equipment worn out, all this causing coal production to fall between 1939 and 1945.

As the war ended the industry was faced with the twin imperatives of undertaking a major reconstruction and investment programme while meeting national energy demand. However, it was satisfying demand by maximising coal output which took first priority. On the other hand the industry was constrained by a Government objective to keep coal prices low. The Ministers' argument being that raising coal prices would lead to a spiral of other price and wage increases and make more difficult the competitive position of British exports. Furthermore, the Government desired the restarting of coal exports claiming that;

"the foreign exchange from their trade will be essential to the country's economy" [by helping to correct balance of payment problems]⁽¹⁴⁾

The same concern for the balance of payments ruling out the importation of mining machinery while national mining machinery manufacturers lacked the means to produce the amount of equipment required and would need time to gear up their productive capacity.

Against the background of these constraints the industry was immediately confronted with the interrelated problems of how to fund investment given a shortfall on internal revenue, how to hold on to labour in the post war boom and how to meet the pressing energy demand. The N.C.B.'s solution was first to borrow from the treasury for investment, second to oppose the setting up of competing male manufacturing employment in the coalfields and third to establish joint production committees in order to raise the numbers working on the coal face, bring down absenteeism and increase output per man shift.

With maximising output the first concern the N.C.B. began work on surveying the coalfields in order to set area production quotas, assess the feasibility of individual colliery modernisation projects and allocate capital to the coalfield areas. An insight into the coal board's thinking being provided by the North East Development Area Plan⁽¹⁵⁾ whose statements on the coal industry rely on the work carried out and information provided by the N.C.B. According to the N.E.D.A. Plan three overlapping phases of coal industry modernisation could be distinguished;

- (a) an immediate very short term policy output through re-organisation can begin to be effective.
- (b) a middle phase of intensive re-organisation by which it is hoped to raise output per man shift from the present figure of 20 cwts. to 30 cwts.

- (c) a longer term phase covering the next twenty five to thirty years during which much of the remaining coal reserves in the older mining areas may become exhausted.

In relation to the Northumberland coalfield the authors of the N.E.D.A. Plan noted that;

"We are of the opinion that comparatively stable conditions can be expected throughout the period of the plan, some forty years, though with a gradual shift of emphasis to that part of the coalfield north of the River Blyth and a considerable falling off in production from many pits in the south in thirty to forty years. We are not aware of any large scale schemes of re-organisation that would give rise to appreciable labour redundancy. We may expect to see a gradual decline in the importance of the central Northumberland pits, mostly in a belt of territory running north-east from Throckley to Blyth; but there are interspersed with these pits a limited number of very long life collieries and only the comparatively small Throckley-Newburn area west of Newcastle, where conditions approximate more closely to north-west Durham, is likely to be completely worked out within the next twenty-five years.

Whilst the position in Northumberland, therefore, indicates no serious problem of man-power redundancy, there may be a slow lessening of employment in the industry south of Blyth, though the rate of pit closure

should be sufficiently gradual for the area to adapt itself to change."(16)

With the first priority being the maximisation of coal production the N.C.B. considered the amount of coal reserves in the ground the main factor determining the life of a colliery. Coalfield areas could then be classified as "stable long life" or "declining areas" depending on the extent of reserves. The Throckley/Newburn area was therefore a declining area, the coalfield north of Blyth a stable long life area and the central south east an area facing gradual decline over thirty years but interspersed with longer life pits.

The N.E.D.A. Plan therefore accepted this dual classification system along with the continuing centrality of the coal industry and the need to sustain maximum coal production. These background principles then determined other policies outlined in the N.E.D.A. Plan. Therefore the Plan's authors could state that;

"From the national point of view, with coal the most precious and urgently needed of industrial raw materials, to introduce into the mining areas, without surplus male labour, male-employing industries housed in up-to-date factories and able to offer pleasant work at good wages, would inevitably attract men away from the mines with disastrous consequences for coal production; the miner is a skilled worker and it would be a misuse of our restricted mining labour force to divert him to other industry so long as that skill is needed in the colliery. Only by bringing in additional population, which would

provide the labour needed for new industries, could the necessary manpower be provided. But the attraction of further population is not desirable as these areas are, on the whole, areas of high population densities where great difficulty is experienced in finding land free from mining subsidence to house even the existing population ... We have, therefore, based our plan on the assumption that no appreciable volume of alternative male employment should be deliberately introduced into stable long-life mining districts which are unlikely to possess much surplus male labour."(17)

Competing male manufacturing employment was to be steered away from stable long-life coalfields while non-competing industry was to be allowed. The Plan therefore adds that;

"Whilst we make no proposals for major industrial development in the east Durham and Northumberland coalfields (apart from the development of sites at Peterlee in Durham and Holywell in Northumberland)... it is essential that for each stable long-life mining district there should be made available sufficient jobs for women who want them and for the comparatively small number of men unsuited for mining."(18)

If these proposals are read in conjunction with the Board's three stage development programme then it is clear that the Board wanted to keep labour in the coalfields until the time came when the reconstructed collieries could meet demand. Moreover, as the first review of the Northumberland County Development Plan published in 1964

confirmed, there was a serious power shortage in the early 1950's, therefore;

"it was the view of the Government [i.e. the Ministry of Fuel and Power] that male employing industry should not be introduced into the coalfield."⁽¹⁹⁾

Both the Ministry of Fuel and Power and the Coal Board forming an alliance to discourage alternative male employment. At the same time the N.C.B. moved to influence the location and establishment of housing and industrial estates either because such development would sterilise coal reserves or because the stability of the site could not be guaranteed. At Ashington, for instance, while the N.E.D.A. Plan recommended 647 additional acres for residential development the Coal Board was only prepared to release 100 acres, claiming that further development would sterilise reserves. Recognising the importance of avoiding the sterilisation of coal seams the N.E.D.A. Plan suggested the dovetailing of Coal Board and County Plans. However, with the national economy and local labour markets dependent on coal the N.E.D.A. Plan reflected a high degree of subservience to the needs of the N.C.B.

3. The Plans for Coal 1950 to 1959

The N.C.B. proposals for long-term development were published in 1950 in its first "Plan for Coal".⁽²⁰⁾ A plan conceived when demand for more coal was urgent. In it the Board considered that without substantial investment the problem of under-production of coal in relation to demand would recur.

Over the period of the Plan, from 1950 to 1965 an investment programme of £486 million was proposed and an annual target output of

240Mt set for 1961 to 1965. An increase of 38Mt over the 1949 output of 202Mt. Additionally, in order to cut unit costs the Board intended to reduce employment by 11% to 618,000 and to concentrate production in over 250 reconstructed collieries out of the 950 collieries then in existence.

In Northumberland output was to rise by 20% to 14.0Mt by 1961-65, from its 1949 level of 11.7Mt, while manpower was to fall by 17% to 35,600. Each coalfield was allocated capital expenditure with Northumberland getting £27 million for the period 1950-65 or 5.55% of the total allocation. Other areas such as Yorkshire, Nottingham and Derby and South Wales together receiving 49% of the total capital allocation.

All twenty-one coalfield areas would see a measure of improvement or reconstruction but clearly some areas would be developed more than others. This selective concentration of capital in certain areas and collieries raised questions over the future of deselected pits. However, the Plan did not specify which collieries would be reconstructed and which not, nor did it indicate the life span of all the individual pits under the Board's control.

In the short term as long as the priority was to maximise coal production, loss making pits would continue to be subsidised by profits from low cost collieries and the N.C.B. would retain its financial break even target taking one year with the next.

The market forecasts of the Plan for Coal were followed two years later by those of the Committee on National Policy for the Use of Fuel and Power Resources (the Ridley Committee).⁽²¹⁾ From the evidence submitted an acute concern about energy shortage was to the fore and the importance of coal stressed together with the argument

that N.C.B. levels of output were set too low. The Ridley Committee, therefore, suggested that by 1965 demand for coal would be approximately 250Mt and stressed the need to increase coal exports.

In 1956 the first review of the Plan for Coal entitled 'Investing in Coal' was published.⁽²²⁾ The optimistic forecasts of future demand for coal were reflected in the report and an output figure of 240Mt retained for 1965. The N.C.B. going as far as to state that after 1960;

"the problems of over-production for the coal industry scarcely arise."

To reach the target of 240Mt investment at over double the rate calculated in 1950 was deemed necessary. Furthermore, the total output target was to be met by a greater contribution from the low cost East Midlands division and by some 10 million tons of coal produced by opencast mining which had been scheduled to cease by 1965 under the original plan. Consequently the 1950 output forecasts for the Northern and Durham divisions were revised down by 0.3% in the case of Northumberland and Cumberland and 3.0% with regard to Durham.

As far as colliery reconstruction was concerned the Review noted that few projects had been completed and that reconstruction was taking longer than originally thought. The implication of this being that with demand buoyant manpower was expected to fall more slowly than originally forecast in 1950. Hence to maintain output the Board would continue to hold on to labour by resisting the establishment of alternative employment in the coalfields.

By 1959 the N.C.B.'s next significant strategy document was published. Known as the "Revised Plan for Coal"⁽²³⁾ it reflected the changed circumstances of the time. Now the Board was saying that;

"In Britain it is no longer necessary to plan to meet a continuous increase in demand."(24)

The 1965 production target was therefore, for the first time, revised downwards to 220Mt.

Coal stocks had been built up in all the coalfields and by 1958 stood at 36Mt. The Board was now dealing with an over-production crisis which only a few years earlier it had said would "scarcely arise". What had changed was not a fall in the demand for energy but the increasing substitution of coal by cheap oil for both domestic and industrial purposes and for the generation of electricity. Therefore in the summer of 1954 the Ministry of Fuel and power had stated that the Government's fuel policy was;

"to supplement supplies of coal with other kinds of energy - atomic energy as soon as possible and oil forthwith."(25)

The C.E.G.B. being at once authorized to convert sixteen power stations to oil burning while in 1955 "A Programme of Nuclear Power"(26) foresaw an increasing role for nuclear power in the provision of the nation's energy requirements. The promise being that nuclear power would be cheap and clean. A promise which subsequently turned out to be false.

The implications of a fall in coal's share of the energy market having serious employment consequences for the North East coalfields. For now that increasing output was no longer a major concern, collieries which would otherwise have been kept open became earmarked for closure. Secondly, competitive pressures from other fuels, notably cheap oil, plus the slackening of demand for coal, meant that economic

criteria came to replace physical reserves as the measure of a viable pit. These forces deepening the tendency for uneven development both within and between coalfield areas as limited investment was directed towards those pits with the best rates of return. For a time though the N.C.B. stuck to its revised 1965 output target of 220Mt to be met mostly from reconstructed and new collieries and a smaller labour force. Therefore in August 1959 the Coal Board's chairman, James Bowman, told the N.U.M. that to bring output into line with the revised target output;

"between 205 and 250 collieries would close mostly in Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham and the North West and only about half the closures would be because reserves were exhausted."(27)

The prospect of unemployment and surplus labour in the Northern coalfields would now become a public issue exercising the minds of county planners and politicians alike.

4. The Reconstruction of the South East Northumberland Coalfield

In 1949 the N.E.D.A. Plan while opposing competing male employment in stable long life coalfields foresaw a gradual lessening of employment in the coal industry south of Blyth as reserves became exhausted. A process which was expected to take thirty or forty years.

The Plan therefore concluded that the northern part of the coalfield would expand mining employment and therefore;

"there should be comparatively little surplus male labour and nowhere is there a sufficient concentration of population to justify an industrial estate of more than very limited size."(27)

In the case of the southern part of the coalfield a "Quasi New Town" was proposed at Holywell on a 2,093 acre site and with an ultimate population of 44,200 people. According to Pepler and McFarlane, Holywell would be required to accommodate overspill population from Tyneside and also provide employment for;

"any future labour surplus in the mining area south of Blyth."(28)

However the majority of the New Town's inhabitants would;

"be required to make a daily journey of a few miles to and from their work [on Tyneside] ... For the minority, some of whom may be members of the families of the majority, it should be possible to provide work in the new town and industrial areas must be provided and equipped for this purpose ... Furthermore, with the loosening out of the population structure by accommodation of its overspill in peripheral expansion, associated where possible with industrial estates, it follows that a half may have to be called to the further expansion of some of the existing industrial estates, notably at West Chirton and possibly Bede, and industry that might have been steered to them sited instead on estates at Holywell."(29)

Significantly the location of Holywell new town was largely determined by the need to avoid mining subsidence and the sterilisation of coal reserves, Pepler and McFarlane saying that;

"the coal situation is not bad and a large part of the area will be available immediately and the remainder as required."(30)

The Northumberland section of the Plan stressing the need to physically restructure the area and reassemble the population in new settlements.

Morpeth was not recommended to expand. However at Ashington reconstruction was considered essential. Part of the population being exported to the model village of Lynmouth and the Coal Board asked to release more land even if it involved the sterilisation of some coal.

Bedlington was to be extended. The population of another nine villages removed and reassembled at Stakeford on land having no coal difficulties. The new unified village to contain 7,500 inhabitants.

At Blyth it was considered essential to attract a major new employer of male labour to offset the expected redundancies in the shipbuilding industry.

At Cramlington a further development site was identified on which to locate the inhabitants of;

"The obsolete villages of Cramlington, Shankhouse, East Hartford, Klondyke, West Cramlington, Annitsford and Dudley."(31)

Holywell in addition to taking Tyneside overspill was to rehouse the population of the surrounding abandoned villages while the whole population of Dinnington Colliery village was to be brought to a site free from coal south of Seaton Burn.

By 1949 then the N.E.D.A. was proposing a new settlement pattern for South East Northumberland in part shaped by the desire to avoid

coal measures. However, the Plan went further than this for as the 1960 Seaton Valley Town Map noted;

"Since the war, the policy has evolved of grouping new development in a few selected settlements and allowing others to remain static or decline. Several of the old colliery villages have either been completely demolished e.g. Havelock Place, West Cramlington) or are now largely derelict (e.g. Shankhouse, East and West Holywell)."(32)

As early as 1949 therefore areas such as Bedlington, Stakeford, Cramlington and Holywell became earmarked for residential development while other areas were allowed to decline.

In 1952 the County Council produced the 'County Development Plan'(33) which, while committed to relocating population in areas such as Cramlington, Seaton Delaval and Shiremoor, argued for economic retrenchment. The County Plan concluding its section on industry and employment with these remarks;

"Briefly the Plan assumes concentration on the dominant industries of coalmining, shipbuilding and engineering tempered by the general introduction of subsidiary industry to absorb women and men surplus to, or unsuited for, the heavy manual work which is all that is at present available."(34)

The N.C.B. had provided information about the life of pits in the Seaton Valley area and the immediate future seemed secure. The seven largest pits, ranging from the Maude and Eccles employing 1503 miners to the Nelson employing 505, had forecast lives of between ten and

twenty five years, while the smaller Gloria pit employing 235 men had a forecast life of less than ten years. Furthermore, new sinkings were promised and the industry was set to expand north of Blyth so that according to the development plan;

"there is in fact no reason to suppose that the present shortage of labour in the pits will not continue for some time, and over the period of the Plan [i.e. until 1971] the coal industry may well continue to employ the same number of workers as now."(35)

In such circumstances;

"it would be folly to introduce into mining areas an appreciable volume of male employment."(36)

On the basis of the N.C.B. information and the optimistic projections of the first Plan for Coal the County Planners thought it would be necessary to find only 2,750 additional jobs in the county over the next twenty years and that;

"no specific provision should be made for redundant labour in the coal mining industry within the next five years."(37)

Seaton Valley was therefore to be allocated only 40 acres of land for industrial development out of a total county reservation of 887 acres. The County Plan remarking that;

"The Council are not committed to accept the recommendation in the N.E.D.A. Report in favour of a quasi new town at Holywell preferring instead the North

Killingworth scheme ... by reason of its situation in relation to the ... displaced population of the riverside towns."(38)

Later in 1960 the Seaton Valley Town Map would say;

"The present and future mining programme renders most of the southern part of the Town Map area unsuitable for large scale development. Thus the proposal in the Pepler-McFarlane Plan for a new town in the vicinity of West Holywell cannot be implemented. In any case, its close proximity to the proposed large scale development at North Killingworth makes it an unsuitable location."(39)

This then was the position in 1952 with the County Council stressing the centrality of coal, the consolidation of existing industries and the scaling down of even the limited development proposed in the N.E.D.A. plan. Such a position, clearly supported the monopoly position of the N.C.B. and their ability to recruit and retain labour on terms they found favourable. Any awareness of the dangers of relying upon a single industry to provide the bulk of employment in a locality was held in check by optimistic forecasts about the future of the coal industry.

5. The Cramlington New Town Proposal

By late 1956 the forecasts and optimism expressed only four years earlier in the 1952 Development Plan suffered a severe setback when the County Planning Committee received the news that;

"the N.C.B. intended to reduce employment in coal mining in Seaton Valley from 5,900 to under 1,000 by 1971 and therefore it is apparent that some new source of employment will have to be found if population is to be retained."(40)

It was therefore becoming clear that the Development Plan assumption, based on the 1950 Plan for Coal, of a stable coal industry operating at 1951 manpower levels until 1971 was untenable. Instead a substantial decline in coal mining was to be expected during the period of the Development Plan. As a consequence Seaton Valley stood to lose its major employer of male labour with no alternative available unless something was done. The something being Cramlington New Town, first mentioned in a report to the County Planning Committee in 1958 when it concluded that;

"consideration must be given to the selection of a further site for a major new residential area for development on comprehensive lines and everything points to Cramlington as being the most suitable situation for such development."(40)

However, even before 1958 William Leech Ltd was buying up sites in order to establish a substantial land bank and had just been refused planning permission for housing development by Seaton Valley Urban District Council. Significantly, Leech's agent did not appeal the decision and at a meeting of the District Council on the 28th October 1958 it was recommended that Leech be;

"granted the opportunity to make representations at a suitable time in the future when the pattern of development in the area is receiving attention."⁽⁴²⁾

The clear implication being that Seaton Valley Urban District Council would at some time in the future look favourably upon an application for private residential development.

By May 1959 the County Planning Committee was considering the scheduling of Cramlington as a Comprehensive Development Area with a population of 20,000. But it was with the publication of the Seaton Valley District Town Map in 1960 that the first detailed statement about the development of Cramlington New Town was outlined. The rationale for the New Town being presented in terms of the need to do something about job loss in the coal sector and as a method of coping with overspill population from the northern half of the Tyneside Conurbation.⁽⁴³⁾ Elphick, however, adds that in 1958 Northumberland County Council had suggested that Cramlington project to private developers as a response to their complaints about a shortage of building land. Subsequently the developers, William Leech Ltd and J.T. Bell and Sons, agreed to relinquish their interests in land at Killingworth on the understanding that they could have all the land necessary for housing and central area uses at Cramlington.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The Seaton Valley District Town Map⁽⁴⁵⁾ was approved by the County Council in February 1961 despite opposition from Blyth Borough Council who objected to resources being concentrated at Cramlington. However, the Town Map now envisaged that Cramlington would have a population of 39,900 by 1971 and a long term population of 54,300. By 1965 the population target had been revised to 60,550 and by 1970 to

62,000. The majority of the population to be made up of immigrants from North Tyneside.

The involvement of private developers was again confirmed in a County Planning document of 1962 when it stated;

"A development company [formed by Leech and Bell] secured an interest in the major part of the area and discussed the possibility of development with the planning authority. A master plan was the first necessity, but the resources of the planning authority were being applied to the Killingworth scheme. It was agreed that the proposal could be furthered by the appointment of a planning consultant to draw up a master plan. A firm of consultants was therefore engaged by the development company and a master plan presented in summer 1961."⁽⁴⁶⁾

A crucial decision had therefore been taken by the County Council, the County Planning Department and Seaton Valley Urban District Council to involve private developers in constructing what was to become a predominantly owner occupied private sector New Town. This partnership arrangement has been described by Byrne⁽⁴⁷⁾ as producing a corporatist strategy for the resolution of the problems created by the restructuring of the Northumberland coal industry in the late 50's and early 60's. While undoubtedly a reasonable characterisation at one level, this assessment tells us nothing about why the New Town was sited at Cramlington rather than elsewhere. The avoidance of coal measures and risk of subsidence is one part of an explanation as is a factorial planning approach which pointed towards Cramlington. However another ingredient suggests the need for both

the developers and the planning authority to secure the co-operation of the landowners in order to avoid planning delays. A task made easier by the fact that one of the major landowners within the Comprehensive Development Area was Lord Ridley who, with his son, sat on the County Planning Committee from 1958 to 1964⁽⁴⁸⁾ The son continuing on the planning committee to at least 1970, acting as vice chair from 1967 to 1969 and chair from 1969 to 1970. On the other hand the land owners stood to gain from the sale of land. For example, in 1962 the county council acquired 170 acres of land south of the railway and north of Station Road for industrial purposes. Part of this land was owned by Lord Ridley. Later, in 1966 Lord Ridley was able to play off the county council against the N.C.B., who wanted his land for open cast mining, in order to dispose of 278 acres north of the railway to the county council for £95,000.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The N.C.B. withdrawing both their objections to the scheduling of the C.D.A. and their bid for the Ridley land after they were offered another site for opencasting north of the River Wansbeck.

A preliminary conclusion, therefore, suggests itself, namely that Lord Ridley stood to gain from the development of Cramlington and could guarantee the co-operation which the developers and county council needed, while his position on the planning committee allowed him to influence the siting of the New Town.

Generally, while other New Towns were regulated by technocrats and planning mechanisms, Cramlington, in so far as it depended upon home ownership for its success, was determined by market forces. Its actual legal status being an area of Comprehensive Development under Section 5(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 being approved as an amendment to the Northumberland County Development Plan.

Within the partnership arrangement the 1965 written analysis⁽⁵⁰⁾ made clear the responsibilities of the various interests so that;

- (a) The private developers would be concerned with the development of the residential areas and the building of the town centre.
- (b) Seaton Valley Urban District Council would be responsible for the main town drainage facilities, including the construction of a sewage treatment works, and as the housing authority for the area, for the building of council houses.
- (c) The County Council was responsible for the promotion of industrial development and the co-ordination of other interests, together with the provision of the major highway network and education and social facilities.

Finally, in order to co-ordinate these various interests both an Action Committee under the chair of the County Planning Officer and a Town Development Sub-Committee of the County Planning Committee was set up in 1962

6. The Private Developers

William Leech Builders was a company first registered in June 1940. Its objects were stated to be builders and contractors and like many other builders it needed to raise money to finance its operations. Early mortgages raised by the company came from the Junior Property and Investment Company, its subsidiary Sunholme Developments and the Rock Building Society later to become the Northern Rock Building Society. Both the Junior Property and

Investment Company and Sunholme Developments being owned and controlled by Robert Joicey Dickinson while the same Dickinson was on the board of the Rock Building Society.⁽⁵¹⁾ The rise of William Leech was therefore linked to Dickinson support.

Yet while Leech was dependent on Dickinson the expansion of the Junior Property and Investment Company in the 1950's was itself made possible by a continuous flow of loans from two main sources. First, the Equitable Life Assurance Company and second the Dickinson/Joicey dynasty itself. Therefore between 1945 and 1954 the third Baron Joicey either on his own or jointly with Dickinson advanced £102,000 to the Junior Property and Investment Company demonstrating the use to which some of the Joicey's £12 million coal compensation money was being put.⁽⁵²⁾

In addition Leech's connections with the Dickinson family went further still with R.A. Barnett, a brother-in-law and business associate of R.J. Dickinson, being on the board of directors of the William Leech Foundation and the William Leech charity the two dominant share holders who in 1961 controlled William Leech Builders.

Just as Leech started as a family firm of speculative builders, so did Bellway, the other major private developer of Cramlington. In 1945 John Bell senior and his two sons specialised in the conversion of flats and terrace houses. By 1946 they had purchased land from the Lord Armstrong Newcastle estate in order to build a street of houses at £1,200 each.

In the early 1930's, Leech's intention was to build "cheap houses for the working man". His first house, in Walker, had three bedrooms and cost £540. By building on a large scale in the form of housing estates, he was able to sell at £280 and with £250 mortgages

arranged, the cost to the buyer was 12/6d. a week. By the beginning of the Second World War, Leech had built 17 estates at a rate of 500 houses a year, many of them in West Newcastle.⁽⁵³⁾ Also active in West Newcastle was John T. Bell. He linked up with a local landlord, J. Gold, and was soon building houses on Grainger Park, an area which became available for development in 1933 as the quarry closed. Between them, Gold the developer and Bell the builder put up more than 300 houses before the war, half for letting and half for sale at a rate of one house a week costing £500 to buy and a pair of flats every ten days costing £800 to buy.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Parallel and closely related to this surge in house building for private ownership went a growth in building society funds. The assets of the societies nationally increasing from £87M in 1920 to £371M in 1930 and £773M in 1939. Therefore Gold, the developer who was putting up houses in the Axbridge Gardens area in partnership with J.T. Bell, noted that;

"The building societies were falling over themselves with money, they used to send agents around the builders to persuade you to take their money."⁽⁵⁵⁾

Gold got loans from the Rock, Grainger, Northern Counties, Percy and St. Andrews societies. Moreover;

"as the market for the more expensive houses became progressively saturated, builders in order to maintain activity were forced to find ways of enabling more families with less free capital, or negligible capital resources, to purchase houses. Building society advances were limited to 75% of the total value of a house. The

problem was thus to finance the balance, that is the deposit required from the purchaser by the building societies. An ingenious system was introduced by which the deposit actually required from the purchasers was reduced to 5%. Building societies advanced an additional 20% by arrangement with the builder against cash and/or other collateral deposit with them by the builder. The purchaser repaid this total 95% advance in the usual way by instalments including interest, so that in the course of time the builder's collateral was automatically redeemed."(56)

These two instances indicating the interdependence of the builders and the building societies. Each needing the other to promote house building for owner occupation and secure profits through house sales.

By the early 60's both firms had large amounts of undistributed profits and both were raising more money by the issue of shares on the market. Cramlington was, therefore, another investment project and needed outlet for capital.

Three companies were then created by Leech and Bell to take responsibility for Cramlington in its early stages, namely Cramlington Developments, Cramlington Investments and Lee-Bell Investments. All three being Bell and Leech subsidiaries equally owned by them. Of these three companies Cramlington Developments was the most significant its purpose being;

"to manage and develop and to co-operate with others in the management and development of building land at and near Cramlington."(57)

All three companies were thus methods of financing and co-ordinating Cramlington development and enabling further land and building purchases jointly by Leech and Bell and all three had as company solicitors Dickinson, Miller and Turnbull of Cross House, Newcastle.

For Bell and Leech, however, their most immediate and important gain resulted from their relationship with the local authorities. For example, in a designated New Town like Washington the capital expenditure of the Development Corporation on infrastructure was borne entirely by the government. In Cramlington part of this infrastructure cost fell on the local authorities although the county council made special arrangements to prevent too large an increase in Seaton Valley rates. The remaining part of the infrastructure cost was met by Cramlington Developments. However, as Elphick⁽⁵⁸⁾ makes clear the developers passed their part of the infrastructural costs on to the house buyer at an estimated cost in 1964 of £180 per house. In addition the developers were able to acquire land in advance of planning permission at agricultural prices rather than, as in a New Town with a Development Corporation, at a price reflecting its status as housing land. Once again, though the costs of land purchase plus the added land value resulting from planning permission for housing was passed on to the house buyer.

Both the Leech and Bell companies did not, however, exist in a vacuum. Instead they are situated within a capitalist logic and set of social relations. Equally, each company as a particular capital has its own distinctive requirements while being subject to the general requirement to make a profit. Therefore during periods of high demand when house prices were being forced up both companies preferred to build for private sale. However, at times of slump in

the private sector they relied on the state for work. The local state in turn acted in two ways to support the private builder, first by having them tender for council house building and second by buying half or fully completed private estates for council tenancy. For example in 1974, Newcastle City Council entered into a package deal with William Leech to buy 270 private houses at a cost of £2,516,333.⁽⁵⁹⁾ This ability to switch from private to public sector building cushioned the builders against slowdown in Cramlington house sales.

John T. Bell, the other main property and building group involved in Cramlington was, like Leech, no small concern. In 1968 the company was extending beyond the North East with five of its twelve major housing developments located outside the region. In 1971 though still involved in the North East through office development at the Regent Centre, Gosforth, and Princess Square, Newcastle, it had building subsidiaries in Scotland, New South Wales and Paris.⁽⁶⁰⁾

By 1971 issued shares numbered 5,318,000 of which the Bell family held 1.7 million making them the largest single group of shareholders.⁽⁶¹⁾ A further 97 share holders held over 1,000 shares each of which the largest were the Midland Bank Executors (89,000), charter Court Pension Trust (70,000), Metropolitan Trust Co. (65,000), Standard Trust (60,000), Eagle Star Insurance (50,00), U.S. and General Trust (40,000) and Samares Investments (39,900). This last shareholder was a Channel Island based company with Lord Ridley as a director.⁽⁶²⁾ It was through this route then that Lord Ridley had a direct material interest in the success of Bellway. Moreover, as we have seen, firms like Bellway (the current name of J.T. Bell and Sons) and William Leech rely upon a guaranteed supply of mortgages from the

building societies both for their land acquisitions and for would be purchasers of their houses. Both R.J. and R.H. Dickinson and Lord Ridley, as directors of the Northern Rock Building Society, were able to ensure that funds were deployed in support of the building companies.⁽⁶³⁾

By the mid 80's Bellway had built up a substantial property investment portfolio and was diversifying its activities into fitted kitchen manufacture and associated retail outlets, heavy plant hire, leisure boat building and security alarm manufacture and fitting. At the same time the company was moving into urban renewal with the support of grant aid from the D.O.E. while its U.K. house building operation was now decentralised into five regional divisions. Each division having its own management and marketing team and each run as a separate profit centre. Indeed after a review in 1987 the company disposed of its Scottish house building division which was trading at a loss and acquired the D.F.W. Golding Group, a southern based house building firm.

Like Bellway, Leech builders had by the early 80's expanded outside the North East. Expansion into these other regions taking place via the acquisition of small local companies and their land banks. Ball⁽⁶⁴⁾ estimating that in 1979 the company had a huge land bank and ranked fifth in a U.K. league table of building firms by housing output. Yet despite its relative importance Leech was still very much a family firm with William Leech retaining important share holdings. However, by 1985 Leech builders had itself been acquired by the Beazer Group⁽⁶⁵⁾ a U.K. house building, construction and property investment conglomerate with major house building and building materials interests in the U.S.A.

7. Cramlington in the Context of National and Regional Policies.

During the Second World War the State had intervened to direct the location of industry, to control supplies and regulate output. In addition, by 1944 the public mood was;

"anti-fascist, libertarian, egalitarian, even utopian, blending belief in military victory with reform, equality of sacrifice with faith in models derived from Roosevelt's New Deal or Russia's socialist appearance."(66)

This pressure of public opinion making it difficult to return to the policies and conditions of the 1920's. The 1944 White Paper on Employment⁽⁶⁷⁾ therefore committed the government to the principle of maintaining a stable and full employment economy and made recommendations towards this goal. Broadly the White Paper suggested that the basic industries should be strengthened and supported so that they reach the highest degree of efficiency. Furthermore domestic expenditure should be maintained at a high level and new enterprises should be encouraged to locate in the former distressed areas. The White Paper explaining the inter-war depression in terms of the over-dependence of certain regions on a few basic industries such as coal, steel and shipbuilding.

Following the White Paper the Distribution of Industry Act sought to redress the balance of industrial activity amongst the regions by allowing the Board of Trade to intervene to influence the locational decisions of private capital. The Board of Trade could therefore assist firms with loans or grants, acquire land, construct advance factories in development areas and prepare sites. Both the

White Paper and the Act being underpinned by the principle that labour reserves represented potential human capital which should be set to work in order to increase the national wealth.

By the early 50's the Labour government was claiming success in supporting the basic industries and diversifying the regional economy. Consequently, registered unemployment in the North East, when compared with the 1920's and early 30's, had fallen significantly. Yet despite this welcome statistic a number of contradictions were already becoming apparent. Both the Labour government of 1945 to 51 in its later stages and the Conservative government subsequently, pursued various forms of repressive incomes policy either by doing deals with the trade union leaders or by using the power of the State to hold down pay demands in the public enterprises and public services. Then other priorities such as public expenditure restraint, and increased efficiency in order to compete internationally began to take precedence over the former commitment to full employment. With this shift of emphasis the government drew back from directing industry to particular locations or restricting industrial growth in the South East and the Midlands.

From 1957 to 1959 unemployment rose in the North East Development Area, however, this was seen by the Board of Trade as a locality problem rather than a problem effecting the region as a whole. Indeed as far as the Board of Trade was concerned the region was not relatively prosperous and the priority was to protect new and existing industry and manufacturing. New firms would not, therefore, be encouraged to set up in an area with a tight labour market. Consequently the "solution" to what was perceived as local unemployment was the 1960 Employment Act which designated development

districts (rather than areas) for assistance and allowed the districts to be removed from assisted status once labour reserves had been soaked up.

When the Act came into force in April 1960 only one of the Northumberland sixteen exchange areas was listed as a Development District. This was Haltwhistle and in less than two years it was put on the stop list and then removed from the list altogether. Prudhoe was added later in 1960 but it too was put on the stop list in 1961. It was taken back in 1962 and kept on the Development list thereafter. Blyth and Seaton Delaval (including Cramlington) were admitted to the list at the end of 1961 and then in May 1963 the North Tyneside area (including Killingworth) was added.⁽⁶⁸⁾ While such a system aimed to protect existing employer and labour forces and target assistance to small areas, it was to prove inadequate when unemployment became more generalised across the region. Moreover it suggested a stop go approach to development area status and therefore lacked consistency.

By December 1962, unemployment was increasing both nationally and in the regions and could not therefore be said to be simply a local matter. At this stage the N.E.D.O. report on "Conditions Favourable to a Faster Rate of Economic Growth"⁽⁶⁹⁾ seemed to indicate the way forward and reflected government thinking on regional policy. In short the report called for an increase in national output and productivity and enhancement of manufacturing competitiveness with the expansion of public expenditure being essential to the achievement of these aims. A move back to larger development areas was suggested. This would offer a wider choice of location and therefore increase the chance of attracting a larger number and greater variety of firms stimulating the development of industrial complexes. These complexes

and other areas could then act as growth points which would suck in labour and lead to regional economic take off and self sustaining growth.

Within the North East region the rise in unemployment prompted Labour politicians and trade unionists to lobby the government to do something. The result was the Hailsham White Paper entitled "The North East, a Programme for Development and Growth".⁽⁷⁰⁾ However, this report had been preceded in 1963 by the North East Area Study⁽⁷¹⁾ which itself formed the basis for the White Paper. The study and White Paper representing the development and continuity of thought on regional policy from the 40's to the 60's.

The North East Study identified the unemployment rate, the participation rate and the rate of out migration as the main problems. It further suggested a shortfall of 130,000 male jobs in the region by 1981. The cause of these problems being the dependence of the region on four major industries, namely coal, shipbuilding, steel and chemicals. Furthermore the study went on to say that;

"The present nationally uneven spread economic activity and the wide disparity in employment opportunities are socially harmful and economically inefficient."⁽⁷²⁾

Part of the solution to these problems was then thought to be the diversification of the economic structure of the region with the most urgent need that of attracting new industry and expanding existing firms. This strategy would, it was hoped, moderate the uneven development between the regions and equalise employment opportunities. However, in intra-regional terms industry and manufacturing plant were not spread evenly across the region. Instead;

"The attack would be concentrated on a growth zone roughly bounded by Tyneside, Teeside and the Great North Road."(73)

The downside of the growth zone proposal was then recognised in that;

"The concentration of effort on the growth zone is bound to mean a relative worsening in the prospects for local industrial jobs in places outside it."(74)

Fortunately, as the Northumberland County Planning Committee noted, the growth zone proposed in the White Paper extended as far north as Cramlington. In the rural zone north of the coalfield only marginal population change was envisaged. The rural zone providing labour for the growth zone and an amenity area for the population of the industrial south. While within the rural zone itself public investment would be concentrated in particular locations and the rural economy diversified with the introduction of forestry and tourism.

The concern of the North East Area Study was not only with the attraction of new industry but with modernisation in general. However, these other aspects tended to be linked to the needs of industry. For example, the study called for wide ranging environmental improvement since the North East;

"would not be able to attract or hold the professional, technical and other white collar workers on whom modern industrial development depends, unless they (and their wives) find the general environment and society of the region congenial."(75)

Moreover the image of the North needed to be positively attractive to help it compete with other regions. As the study noted;

"For a business man considering whether to go in for expansion in the North East rather than elsewhere, or not at all, even generous inducements and assurances of ample labour supply may not be enough to offset the effects of dismal town centres, decaying villages, bad roads and a scarred industrial countryside."(76)

Environmental improvement was, therefore, urgent and necessary in order to attract industry and hold labour. However, what the study failed to acknowledge was that the dereliction it described was no act of God but the result of past policies.

In the same way the study went on to recommend the modernisation and expansion of the housing stock for two main reasons. First as a means of retaining and attracting key workers from outside the region and second as a means of facilitating intra-regional labour mobility. Furthermore, within this expanded construction programme both private developers and the local authorities would have important roles to play therefore;

"Part of the increased housing programme must clearly come from private enterprise. For economic growth this is important; the region needs better housing prospects and a wider variety of types of housing for employees of the middle range. This should be facilitated not only by steps taken nationally to ease the financing of house purchase and private building to let but also by greater readiness by local planning authorities to permit house

building by private enterprises on the rural fringes and beyond.

But public authority must make the main contribution. And to increase labour mobility it will be important to seek ways of reducing the extent to which eligibility for dwellings is restricted to families already in the area, and on the waiting list of the providing authority."⁽⁷⁷⁾

When the White Paper was published in November 1963 it echoed the philosophy and strategy of the North East Area Study. Broadly, four themes could be distinguished in the White Paper.

First a need to modernise the means of communication, the built environment and the infrastructure of the region, with private enterprise playing a significant part in this project. In addition an increased rate of house building was called for with the local authorities asked to take the lead in this regard and make wider use of industrialized building techniques.

Once again it was stressed that the over-riding need was to diversify the region's economic life by attracting new industry from other parts of the country. This it was hoped would provide the basis for self-generating regional growth, however recognition was also given to the fact that regional growth could not be sustained without national growth. In the short term though the Government would continue to provide finance and other assistance to encourage industry to the North-East pending the hoped for economic take off when the region would be able to stand on its own feet.

Third, the White Paper saw the New Towns as central to regional development since they represented growth points within the growth zone. Therefore according to the White Paper, Cramlington could;

"make a useful contribution to the region's development."(78)

Lastly the White Paper adopted the growth zone and growth point policy of the Area Study. This meant that public-sector investment was to be concentrated at particular zones and locations in the belief that private investment would follow. On the one hand the New Towns such as Cramlington would act as magnets to which residents outside the growth zone could move to or commute from. On the other, the growth potential of the New Towns would be enhanced if firms involved in similar activities could be attracted since they would act as "breeders" of further economic development. Moreover, as a Northumberland County Planning Committee Report noted;

"None of the other centres were strong enough individually to act as a magnet to growth on the scale required. As the industrial strength of the sub-region builds up led by Cramlington and Killingworth the other centres should find that the task of modernisation is made easier, for they will be operating in a developing area, instead of a static or declining one."(79)

In other words development and economic prosperity would spread outwards from the growth zone although how and indeed whether this would happen remained something of an act of faith rather than an empirically validated fact.

With the publication of the White Paper the establishment of the Northern Economic Planning Board and Council followed in 1964. Both these bodies supporting the analysis of the White Paper while

producing a new regional plan known as "Challenge of a Changing North".⁽⁸⁰⁾ This plan added to the proposals outlined in the White Paper. In it is a concern for the quality of industrial growth and not just the quantity. Emphasis is therefore placed on the development of capital intensive and science based industries alongside a linked need to increase the amount of basic research done in the region. Furthermore, labour should be well paid with a high skill content and both management and trade unions should ensure that flexibility in the use of labour is encouraged. This being possible since;

"The conditions which may have justified restrictive practices in the past on the part of either management or trade unions no longer obtain in the region. Therefore the need today is for fully co-operative attitudes on both sides of industry."⁽⁸¹⁾

It was not only a matter of modernising the infrastructure in order to attract and facilitate new industry but also a question of increasing productivity and encouraging technical innovation. Government assistance to achieve these ends was therefore to be welcomed. The report saying that:

"Higher productivity is, to a great extent, a matter of having more efficient plant. This means more investment. It is encouraging therefore to see the heavy capital investment already undertaken and in hand in the region, particularly by the larger industrial firms and by the nationalised industries; and we welcome the preferential treatment being given to the region, as a development

area, in the matter of investment grants towards the renewal of plant and machinery. Industry must take full opportunity to modernise with government assistance.⁽⁸²⁾

Lastly, in terms of sectoral balance and quality work, it was desirable that the region should not become a site for;

"branch factories engaged in assembly work. It must have its proper share of research and development units and of administration."⁽⁸³⁾

8. Relocating the Working Class

Cramlington, as we have seen, was envisaged as a growth point and a solution to the problem of a redundant population made larger by the contraction and restructuring of the coal industry. However, like Killingworth New Town, it was also meant to be a receiving zone for an overspill population from Newcastle and the northern half of the Tyne. In the words of the planning consultants' report prepared in 1961⁽⁸⁴⁾ employment at Cramlington would therefore need to cater for;

1. Ex miners who could be adapted into semi-skilled work.
2. Ex-shipyard and engineering workers who may already have some special skill available.
3. Young women seeking factory work.

The miners coming on to the labour market as the pits in the Seaton Valley area closed. The ex-shipyard and engineering workers coming from Newcastle and Wallsend and the young women coming from both of these localities and from Seaton Valley.

In this section, I therefore want to consider Cramlington in the context of Killingworth and the redevelopment of Newcastle since it was this redevelopment which in part produced the overspill population of these two towns.

A reading of W. Burns' book (Newcastle, A Study in the Re-Planning of Newcastle upon Tyne), indicates a desire to establish the future in the present, to do away with the old and bring in the new. The Newcastle housing programme therefore provided for the;

"maximum possible clearance of older houses, combined with a massive improvement programme."(85)

This concern to modernise the city being underpinned, to a degree, by an environmental determinism which suggested that;

"It is the mean street that produced the mean men and lean and tired women and unclean children."(86)

Moreover, it was not simply the case of an "evangelistic bureaucrat" wanting to establish a new Jerusalem but also of an ambitious Labour politician, T. Dan Smith, and a city Labour group fired with a;

"determination to resurrect the city and the region and to turn Newcastle into "the Brasilia of the Old World."(87)

Smith justifying modernisation in terms of improving the conditions of the working class.

The consequent redevelopment could not therefore be piecemeal but had to be comprehensive and extensive. In the west of the city, for example, the Cruddas Park area was cleared of small terrace

housing and replaced with high rise flats and a neighbourhood shopping centre. Likewise, the centre of the city was gutted to make way for the Eldon Square Shopping Centre. The scale of the city wide redevelopment programme providing huge profits for the building companies at the same as it facilitated local corruption.

The Killingworth scheme was approved by Northumberland County Council in August 1958 although the development process did not begin until the mid 60's. According to the Killingworth Information Digest, Killingworth was;

"conceived as a hard edged 'castle town' set in a landscape of parkland and is approached by a causeway access across a sheet of water as a drawbridge crosses a moat."(88)

In reality Killingworth consists of a mix of housing design. The Towers are made up of 740 dwellings in 27 slab blocks of six and ten storeys. The blocks are inter-connected by open walkways at the 5th and 8th floors which continue as external decks giving access to the dwellings. The walkways and decks are reached by nine lift towers and by a long walkway. Visually the towers are a blot on the landscape, a mass of grey concrete with windswept walkways and vandalised surroundings. All this is hardly surprising since the towers were system built junk. Of the other two housing areas the "Old Garths" were system built, low rise, flat roofed housing, while the "New Garths" was conventional housing.

As Taylor⁽⁸⁹⁾ notes two factors determined the architecture of Killingworth, first building firms wishing to profit from the large scale use of industrialised unit construction and second the

employment by the county of architects wedded to the utilitarian ideas of the modern movement as the professional fashion of the 60's. To this I would add lack of restraint provided either by market discipline or popular democratic control.

By the late 70's Killingworth Towers had become an estate which was "difficult to let, difficult to live in and difficult to get out of". Its unpopularity meaning that only the most desperate and powerless people with no other housing alternative would accept a tenancy on the estate. What was supposed to have been an imaginative and futuristic city turned out to be a ghetto reflecting Damars characterisation, so that;

"in one sense, the slum clearance estates have replaced the very slums whose problems they were meant to eradicate; they contain the detritus of capitalism, the manual working class family with low occupational skills whose problems tend to get swept under the carpet or hidden in the corner."(90)

Or in the words of the Department of the Environment;

"'Difficult to let' is a description in most cases of the process whereby certain estates progressively accumulate a concentration of families who are on low incomes, who are unemployed or who have other related social problems."(91)

Killingworth by the 1980's, therefore, contained an over preponderance of a particular part of the working class, namely the surplus population. Friend and Metcalf describing the surplus population as;

"those who are long-term unemployed, most of those for whom periods of unemployment alternative with dependence on temporary or casual part-time work; those participating in the bottom reaches of the "black economy" outside the tax system; all those who are totally dependent on state benefits or forms of charity (including the mass of pensioners, the chronically sick and disabled, and single parent families on social security); and those people who, although in regular employment in labour-intensive sweated occupations or the state service sector, earn wages significantly below the national average and who live in households where the standard of living only exceeds the minimum poverty line because of the receipt of means tested benefits."(92)

Moreover this surplus population did not magically appear but was produced by capital at a particular time so that a significant proportion of it was unemployed because;

"they are marginal to the requirements of capital in terms of the direct production of surplus value during the current long wave of stagnation."(93)

In contrast to Killingworth, a predominantly public sector New Town, Cramlington was to be mostly private sector and market led. The effect of this on the architecture of the town was to reproduce traditional housing forms since the guiding yardstick for the private developers was what had sold in the past. This traditionalism and resistance to the new, allied to a concern to keep costs down, resulted in the modification of the consultants' earlier plans. Plans

which had proposed a radical separation of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, separate garaging away from the house and communal open space instead of private front gardens. As Elphick notes;

"After visits to Cumbernauld and other towns where segregated system had been attempted the developers were still unconvinced."(94)

In the end the County Planning Department, fearful of any further delay in starting the scheme, allowed the design of the town to confirm to the developers' wishes so that there would now be;

"Fifteen main residential areas each one planned to form a series of housing groups of modest size to foster community spirit. In this way it is hoped to obtain all the advantages of village life coupled with the wealth of service available in a very large town."(95)

Moreover, having grounded the Cramlington scheme in folk notions of an idealised past married to the services of the present, the consultants explained that;

- (a) "A number of housing list and slum clearance families may be attracted to Cramlington and by the availability of houses in the lower price bracket" and
- (b) "Slightly higher class housing will attract persons of a middle income bracket who will in turn vacate houses on Tyneside which will allow a general move up the scale amongst those in poorer accommodation."

But while a minority of the overspill population might be able to buy into owner occupation there was no simple one to one relationship between the global overspill figure and the number of private houses to be built. In other words home ownership was dependent upon centrality in the labour market rather than on an individual's membership of the overspill population as such. Moreover, no local authority administrative mechanism existed which could discriminate in favour of the overspill and allocate it to owner occupied housing. Members of this population would therefore have to compete with other potential home buyers in the Cramlington housing market. Consequently, the overspill population if it were to be housed at all, could only guaranteed accommodation in the public sector.

The reliance on private sector housing having other effects apart from its inability to house the totality of the overspill. For example, the building and sale of housing was likely to be determined by a whole number of factors that were difficult to predict in advance. The implication of this being that there could be no certainty over how many houses would eventually be built for sale or the pace of the building programme. In turn this meant that a disjunction between industrial development and private sector house building was inevitable since the two programmes were subject of differing determinations. Moreover, a coincidence between housing and place of work was impossible to order in a free housing market so that a majority of Cramlington house buyers might work outside Cramlington. Yet bringing together an available pool of labour at Cramlington was central to the attraction, functioning and development of industry. The assembling of workers and their families in one place therefore depended on the provision of public housing. Indeed having or being

offered a job on the industrial estates secured access to Cramlington's public housing.

With a nucleus of labour established the planning consultants expected that as industry expanded more of the overspill would be drawn to Cramlington which in turn would give a further boost to manufacturing expansion. The two processes being complimentary and when completed;

"would endow the New Town with a large measure of independence and gradually transform the dormitory character which it would doubtless have during the initial stages of the project."(96)

So that in the words of the Seaton Valley Town Map Cramlington would become a "self-supporting and balanced community". The reference to balance indicating not only a mix of tenures but a spread of house type and prices in order to create an internal housing market. This would allow first time buyers to move up the housing ladder while remaining in Cramlington thus establishing a relatively stable population.

At one level then Cramlington was from the beginning intended to mostly accommodate the better off sections of the working class in contrast to either Killingworth or the inner area Cruddas Park estate in the West End of Newcastle. In the words of the S.N.A.P. report published in 1972;

"New Towns have accommodated some part of the suburban exodus but predominantly those people who are more skilled, more mobile or potentially successful. Consequently this intervention results in ever greater

proportions of families requiring support in the inner cities.(97)

The mention of the inner city being suggestive of things to come since by the late 80's the Cruddas Park estate contained a large surplus population with 50% of the economically active unemployed.

CONCLUSION

It is worthwhile remembering that this chapter was titled "Aspects of Modernisation". In the case of the North East the nationalisation of the coal industry was viewed by many as central to the modernisation of the national economy. Moreover, nationalisation, when dressed in the ideology of modernity could appear to be class neutral and acceptable, by offering all things to all men. For example, for the T.U.C. and the miners, nationalisation seemed to provide the basis for better wages and conditions. However, an examination of nationalisation in the context of class forces indicates that it was intended as a mechanism for defusing labour unrest and incorporating labour. Secondly, nationalisation was a precondition for financing and reconstructing the coal industry so as to provide a cheap source of fuel for capital in general. Therefore, from the start the Coal Board was not allowed to increase coal prices and had to borrow from the Treasury and pay interest on the loan. Not only that, the industry was restricted to extracting coal rather than being able to expand into coal distribution, mining machinery or chemicals. Indeed at nationalisation a boundary was drawn around coal as an extractive industry rather than extending the boundary to include other sectors such as power generation. Equally, the top down form of nationalisation which tied the industry to the state limited

democracy in the mines and allowed the industry to be subject to wider macro-economic goals.

After the war and up to the late 1950's, the priority of the N.C.B. was to produce coal and retain labour in the coalfields pending the reconstruction of the collieries. Both the 1950 Plan for Coal and the 1956 Review setting an output target of 240Mt for the 1961-65 period. The N.E.D.A. plan and the Northumberland County Plan of 1952 echoing the centrality of coal and recommending that competing employers of male labour be steered away from the coalfield. A strategy supported by the Northumberland County N.U.M. and coalfield M.P.'s and councillors. The County Plan reinforcing the policy of discouraging alternative male coalfield employment by not endorsing the New Town at Holywell while supporting development further south, just off the coalfield at Killingworth.

By late 1956, as coal began to be substituted by cheap oil and the beginnings of nuclear power, the Coal Board's output targets were revised downwards. Economic criteria began to replace physical reserves of coal as the sign of a viable pit and the Board announced its intention to reduce mining employment in the Seaton Valley area and concentrate production in modernised collieries. This shift away from maintaining labour in the pits, seriously undermining the assumptions of the County Plan and the N.E.D.A. plan. Now the concern of local councillors and politicians was to provide alternative employment in Seaton Valley. Consequently Cramlington was only able to come on to the development agenda with the decline of coal and the displacement of mine labour. At the same time the redevelopment of Newcastle and North Tyneside was creating an overspill population needing accommodation while the private developers were building up a

land bank in Seaton Valley and pressing the local authorities to approve housing schemes.

On the one hand, Leech builders, a central player in the Cramlington project, owed its early development to coal compensation money. On the other, Cramlington represented an investment project, with a precondition for its success hanging on the availability of mortgages for intending home buyers.

Lord Ridley appears as a mediating and gatekeeping figure by virtue of his membership of the public and private spheres and by his interest in land ownership. With compulsory purchase powers held in reserve Ridley's co-operation and mediating role over land disposal was central. Moreover, he was also able to personally gain from Cramlington development not only by selling his land but also by managing shareholding in Bellway builders. In addition his position as a director of the Northern Rock Building Society allowed him a significant say in the deployment of society funds for mortgages. The builders themselves buying land at less than planning development cost and passing on infrastructural cost and added land value as cost to the house buyer.

In a regional development context, Cramlington was seen as a growth point within a greater growth zone. The aim being to diversify away from coal to a wider manufacturing base and concentrate this development at Cramlington in the expectation of creating knock on economic growth effects across the sub region. Yet this growth point policy implied uneven development by centring resources at one place and not another. An argument not lost on councils in the Ashington exchange area, who in 1969, as the pits closed, pressed the County Council to;

"put less emphasis on the New Towns of Cramlington and Killingworth."(98)

The District Councils wanting an undertaking from the county council that they would not persuade industrialists to locate in the New Towns to the neglect of the rest of the county. The county council's disingenuous reply indicating that locational decisions lay with industrialists themselves taking into consideration the relative advantage of particular places.

While the economic ripple effects of the growth point policy remained unproved a justification for diversifying the industrial base was that this would cushion the region against a downturn in the economy. A line of reasoning which would be well tested in later years and found wanting.

As we have seen a major thrust of the modernisation policy, as embodied in the White Paper and the "Challenge of a Changing North", stressed increasing industrial investment, productivity increases and the enhancement of industrial competitiveness. However, there was no detailed statement of the implications for labour of these policies. The assumption being that general economic growth would suck in displaced labour and new entrants to the labour market.

The "Challenge of the Changing North" emphasised the requirement of the region to attract science based and high technology industry rather than branch plants. Moreover the 'North' needed to increase its percentage of well paid jobs with high skill content. The unspoken difficulty, however, was that there was no mechanism that could guarantee these objectives.

Cramlington, while it was intended as a growth point was also meant to drop its dormitory character and become a self contained and

balanced community. The extent to which this would occur depended on the "attraction of industry on a large scale", secondly on a coincidence between home and workplace and thirdly on a suitable range and quality of jobs being available in sufficient number to allow homebuyers in Cramlington who worked outside Cramlington to change their jobs. Again none of this could be guaranteed.

Cramlington in various planning documents, was described as a partnership between the private developers and the local authorities. However, the idea of partnership obscures as much as it reveals about the relationship. Clearly, the provision of investment on infrastructure, council housing, schools, libraries and leisure facilities as well as environmental improvement was central to the whole project. But it was public investment without any certainty that the private sector would invest at the level expected.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CRAMLINGTON, ITS EARLY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

BACKGROUND

From around 1926 onwards a new form of stabilising the political system was established which lasted until the early 70's. Middlemas has referred to this new system as a corporatist bias which elevated trade union and employers' organisations from self interest groups to quasi-governing institutions. The viability of this corporatist system resting upon the participants' acceptance of an overarching national interest and the abandonment of an ideology of class interest. In essence corporatism represented an informal system of negotiation and mutual accommodation between the state, organised labour and organised employers and found expression in such bodies as the N.E.D.C. and the N.E.D.O. set up in 1961.

Throughout the 1940's, 50's and 60's the dominant tendency within all the major political parties accepted the idea of the "middle way" and established a post war consensus around the acceptance of the welfare state, a full employment economy, public spending and state intervention in the economy and civil society. Any party political arguments being about the degree and boundary of intervention rather than the principle of intervention. A major aim of government being to prevent crisis and class confrontation and establish institutions to further this aim.

By the 1960's the Labour Party was predominantly an integrative party which from the late 30's onwards had come to rely upon Keynesian ideas to underpin its political project. As Przeworski has noted;

"It was Keynesianism that provided the ideological and political foundations for the compromise of capitalist democracy. Keynesianism held out the prospect that the State could reconcile the private ownership of the means of production with democratic management of the economy ... Keynesianism provided the foundation for class compromise by supplying those political parties representing workers with a justification for holding office within capitalist society ... It appeared that there was something to be done, that the economy was not moving according to natural laws, that economic crises could be attenuated and the waste of resources and the suffering alleviated if the State pursued anticyclical policies of demand management ... The government had the capacity to close the 'full employment gap' to insure that there would be no unemployment of men and machines.(1)

Against this background of acceptance of Keynesian economics the immediate post war period saw the beginning of Marshall Plan aid for Europe. The Marshall programme forming a central element in the restructuring of the European economy in the interests of American business. Moreover, by helping to revive the European economies and by funding non-communist trade unions, the Marshall Plan aimed to secure Europe from the communist threat and prevent the economic deterioration that would;

"breed demands for socialist planning and workers' control".(2)

With the stabilisation of post war capitalism under American hegemony the western economies boomed between the years 1950 and 1973. In the Advanced Capitalist Countries wages and productivity rose at nearly 3½ per cent per year while labour markets remained tight. Thus according to Armstrong, Glyn and Harrison;

"Rising wages were important for markets primarily because workers' additional spending accounted for the bulk of the growth in consumption expenditure. Rising spending on consumer goods in turn allowed the industries producing them to grow more or less in line with those producing means of production. Indeed, an important element of the boom was the mass production of durable goods and the improvement of the technologies required to produce them."⁽³⁾

It was in this context of political compromise, rising real living standards and the spread of consumption goods that commentators⁽⁴⁾ could talk of the arrival of the affluent society. Capitalism had been tamed and transformed. The alternation of boom and slump was a phenomenon of the past.

In place of the old owner-entrepreneurs it was suggested that the control of corporate business was exercised by non-owning executives whose priorities now included the maintenance of corporate growth, employee welfare, customer service and social responsibility rather than the pursuit of profit maximisation. These managers forming not so much a new ruling class as a professional strata. Power being distributed among these and other social groups throughout society in a countervailing fashion with no set of interests dominant.⁽⁵⁾

Indeed modernity was said to be characterised by an ever increasing reduction in inequalities of income and opportunity with manual workers now able to secure "middle class" incomes. At the same time the intermediate strata was expanding both in relative and absolute terms while the working class was considered to be disappearing as the old smoke stack industries declined. The course of industrial development and technological progress abolishing fragmented, repetitive and alienating work tasks. In future capital would require labour with high technical skills and knowledge while workers would enjoy greater autonomy, job variety and opportunities for initiative, creativity and co-operative working. The primary function of management also changing from maintaining discipline and extracting effort to collecting and sharing information and providing advice and support.(6)

Alongside the supposed overcoming of alienation within the workplace change was also occurring in the physical environment. Old working class areas were undergoing redevelopment while new suburbs, estates and towns were created. These old areas had sustained a particularistic working class culture of solidarity and labourism. Within the new communities on the other hand social existence was atomised. Status concerns replaced the old ethos of solidarity while the inhabitants of the new areas abandoned old political and class loyalties and took on middle class values. According to Abrams;

"The old working-class ethos is being eroded by prosperity and the increasing fluidity of our society. People now know they can improve their lot by their own efforts. And as they succeed, they change their values and cease to identify themselves with the class from which they sprang."(7)

Butler and Rose⁽⁸⁾ suggesting that the fall in Labour voting was significant in the New Towns and in constituencies with extensive housing programmes. A chain of reasoning therefore concluded that economic prosperity and increasing social mobility had led to the embourgeoisement of the working class which in turn produced a decline in the Labour vote.

At another level the embourgeoisement thesis was also a refutation of Marx. For instead of the increasing immiseration which Marx had predicted, the working class was better off than it had ever been. Instead of intensifying polarisation between the bourgeoisie and proletariat the working class was being progressively integrated into the social system. Instead of the working class acting as the gravedigger of capital its revolutionary potential had been dissipated.

It was just such a negation of the working class as a collective agent of change which was accepted by Crosland in his book 'The Future of Socialism'. He notes for example that Marx's;

"prophecies have been almost without exception falsified, and his conceptual tools quite inappropriate."⁽⁹⁾

Then, looking forward to continuing economic growth and consensus politics, he had this to say;

"One cannot imagine today a deliberate offensive alliance between Government and employers against the unions on the 1921 or 1925/26 or 1927 model, with all the brutal paraphernalia of wage cuts, national lockouts, and anti-union legislation; or, say a serious attempt to enforce,

as so often happened in the 1920's a coal policy to which the miners bitterly objected."(10)

And he went on;

"The Conservative Party lacks the essential tribute of a counter revolutionary party, a faith, a dogma, even a theory. The British Conservative is essentially pragmatic ... his attachment is to the status quo whatever the status quo may be. This is particularly true today ... therefore it was never likely that the Conservatives would destroy the hard core of the achievement of the post war Labour Government and even if we suffer several more years of Conservative rule, I would expect 75% of the reforms to remain intact."(11)

On one side there is the confident assertion that ideology had ended and that we are all middle class now. On the other continuing industrial and technological progress humanises the labour process and transforms the capital labour relationship. Crosland speculating that the politics of consensus and Keynesian economic management would continue into the indefinite future.

In an attempt to evaluate the "embourgeoisement thesis" Goldthorpe and his colleagues published the Affluent Worker Study in 1969.(12) This study concluded that most manual workers thought of their work as mere labour. As work which gave them little satisfaction. Their jobs were monotonous, routine, lacking in responsibility and as often as not carried out under hard physical conditions. When asked "what is it that keeps you here", the

relatively high level of pay was the most important reason for remaining at work.

Thus the increasing affluence of the manual workers was at the expense of performing jobs which had little reward except money. In contrast most of the white collar workers felt that their jobs were intrinsically satisfying.

Furthermore, the way the manual workers earned their wages involved a high degree of overtime and shift working. White collar work, however, was typically a nine-to-five affair. This difference in working arrangements having detrimental effects on the health and family life of the manual worker.

Moreover, white collar workers had greater job security and chances for promotion than the manual workers. They felt that by individual effort they could get ahead, earn increased income and better their position. By comparison the manual workers recognised that they could only improve their wages and conditions through trade union membership.

When the social networks of the manual workers were examined it was found that most associated either with kin or with fellow manual workers. Few had contact with or membership of middle class organisations.

In contradiction to the predictions of Abrams, Butler and Rose support for the Labour Party was still apparent amongst the manual workers and had not been dented by affluence.

Goldthorpe therefore had this to say;

"A factory worker can double his living standards and still remain a man who sells his labour to an employer in return for wages; he can work at a control panel rather

than on an assembly line without changing his subordinate position in the organisation of production; he can live in his own house in a "middle class" estate or suburb and still remain little involved in white-collar social worlds."(13)

In general the Affluent Worker Study concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that increased affluence led to the "embourgeoisement" of the manual working class. As Goldthorpe says:

"the direction of these changes, we would suggest, is not towards middle classness, but rather towards what might be termed a more 'privatised' mode of living."(14)

While alongside this home centredness was a concern for individual betterment and an instrumental orientation towards work and to the Labour Party. In other words voting labour was conditional rather than deriving from class sentiment. It was a vote based on calculated self interest and therefore unstable since potentially another Party could make a deeper appeal to individualism and attract this section of working class support.

But while Goldthorpe offered a soft critique of the embourgeoisement thesis Westergaard conducted a frontal assault on notions of the "affluent society", "post-capitalism" and so on. For example he notes that within these problematics;

"Hunches, impressions and assumptions have been given parity with facts. Minor changes have been magnified into major ones, uncertain indications into certain proof. Evidence consistent with several interpretations has been treated as if only one were possible."(15)

He then goes on to conclude that;

"the structural inequalities of capitalist society remain marked. Disparities of economic condition, opportunity and power persist - modified if at all only within fairly narrow limits. There is no built in automatic trend towards diminishing class differentials."⁽¹⁶⁾

The so-called increasing equality of wealth was a product of a selective use of data. Working class children still had little chance of entering university while social mobility was limited and covered fairly short distances. Instead of a plurality and dispersal of power there was a clustering of power so that;

"the dominant grouping is that of a small, homogeneous elite of wealth and private corporate property - politically entrenched in the leadership of the Conservative party; strongly represented in, or linked with a variety of influential public and private bodies ... its members sharing for a large part a common, exclusive educational background, and united by fairly close ties of kinship and everyday association."⁽¹⁷⁾

The split between ownership and control holding little significance with the recognition that directors and top management were also major shareholders operating under the need to maximise profit.

Although the years from the 1960's onwards witnessed a growth in white collar and service employment and a decline in manual work, this trend, Westergaard contends, cannot be equated with the disappearance

of the working class. Furthermore, much service employment was low paid, low status and low skilled while there was no guarantee that while collar workers would retain their relative status and privilege. Equally, many clerical workers faced pressures from re-organisation, new technology, rationalisation and productivity drives which placed them in a similar position to semi-skilled manual workers. Indeed Westergaard goes further and rejects the equation that increased affluence automatically produces a conservative orientation. White collar workers cannot therefore be written off as essentially or irredeemably status obsessed conservatives. As Westergaard notes much of the "embourgeoisement" debate rests on an assumed relationship between consumption and consciousness. Not only do we know little of this relationship but consciousness and voting intention are more than a product of consumption.

Lastly, although agreeing that the closed, homogeneous, one industry town is no longer typical Westergaard views this occurrence with equanimity. Parochial solidarity he suggests was the antithesis of class solidarity while the history of the labour movement was an attempted process of overcoming sectional and parochial loyalties in favour of broader unity. The decline of localism is therefore paralleled by the struggle for national unions, industry wide agreements and a widening of working class horizons and standards of comparison.

Meanwhile in a later essay Westergaard⁽¹⁸⁾ criticised not only the interpretation presented in the Affluence Worker Study but also the methodology employed. In the first place the assertion that work relations were no longer a source of social tension was unwarranted since it ignored the brittle nature of the "cash nexus" and the fact

that wage disputes may raise wider issues of control, authority, and government economic policy even if only temporarily.

Second, the stress on a complacent, self absorbed and unreflective "affluent worker" was one sided to the point of caricature. Instead, economic resentment and critical attitudes were more widespread among the working class including its affluent segments than allowed for by Goldthorpe and his colleagues. These critical elements co-existing with;

"attitudes that involve a practical, everyday acceptance of established institutions."(19)

In other words working class consciousness contained a quasi ideology the elements of which were;

"contradictory and lacked coherence and ... partly for that reason, its political potential was uncertain, ambivalent and to a considerable extent latent."(20)

Furthermore, individualistic goals were not foreign to the working class and its organisations either in the past or the present. However what characterised such organisations was:

"a diagnoses of society which concluded that those and other goals are both interdependent and impossible to attain without some general restructuring of society."(20)

Finally, the conditional and limited commitment of the affluent worker to the Labour Party and the trade unions was as much an expression of disillusionment with these organisations as it was a reflection of an

instrumental outlook. At a more fundamental level the "Affluent Worker Study" operated within a simple traditional proletarian, privatised worker distinction. These ideal types structuring the research findings and distorting reality.

At issue in the embourgeoisement and affluent worker debates was the nature of the working class and the future of the labour movement. The inconclusiveness of the debate reflecting both contradictory reality, different interpretation of evidence and different epistemological starting points. Consequently, Goldthorpe stresses the privatised, instrumental, affluent worker who is implicitly conservative yet still labour voting while Westergaard, although acknowledging these elements, was concerned to highlight critical expressions, discontents and radical potential.

The purpose of this chapter is not to examine subjectivity. However, the discussion so far should alert us to the fact that no easy assertions can be made claiming that home ownership, or other consumption item, causes the affluent manual worker to politically realign in a conservative direction or espouse middle class values. Likewise Westergaard's contribution should make us think twice before bracketing off white collar workers as essentially conservative.

The effect of these debates for a study of Cramlington tending to problematise any assumption that from its outset, in the middle of the 60's, it was the locale of a Conservative voting relatively affluent manual working class who were made to vote Conservative by the fact of being owner occupiers. In this context it is instructive that 57% of the affluent worker couples studied by Goldthorpe in 1962/3 were house owners or buyers. A majority of these workers (slightly less than 79%) intended to vote Labour in the 1964 election.

Indeed, when the affluent manual workers association with white collar workers was held constant "indicators of affluence (including home ownership) ceased to be related to vote in any systematic manner."(21)

I will return to the issues of consumption, class and subjectivity in a later chapter. For the moment my intention is to provide a "class map" of Cramlington by drawing upon evidence from early surveys. Then to follow this up by considering the relationship between housing and labour. Lastly I will identify changes in the employment structure of the town, and by means of examples, examine the career of incoming industries.

EVIDENCE FROM EARLY SURVEYS

In 1966, 1968 and 1975, the County Council carried out social surveys in the Cramlington New Town area. The results of these surveys are instructive since they allow an insight into the social structure and economic base of the town.

The 1966 survey⁽²²⁾ divided the Development Area into new and old areas (see map 1) with the new areas (zones 07, 08 and 09) comprising two private estates and a new local authority estate. In the remaining zones making up the old areas, 73.5% of the housing was rented from the local council, 11.8% rented privately, 9.7% rented from the N.C.B. and 5% rented by virtue of employment. By contrast the new areas consisted of 60.2% owner occupied housing and 39.2% council housing.

In 1966 the origin of the migrants to the New Town was as set out in Table 1.

Table 1 **Origin of Migrants** **1966 Survey**

Zone	(Private Estates)		(New Local Authority Estate)	Total
	07	08	09	
Tyneside	41%	31%	55%	39.9%
S.E.Northumberland	35%	33%	31%	34.1%
Co. Durham	7%	17%	9%	10.9%
London and the South	9%	15%	-	10.1%
Other	8%	4%	5%	5%

Overall 39.9% of new residents came from Tyneside, 34.1% from South East Northumberland, 10.9% from Co. Durham and 10.1% from London and the South. In zone 09 (the local authority estate) 95% of new residents came from South East Northumberland, Tyneside and Durham, whereas the two private estates had a significant if small percentage of people coming from outside the North East.

The 1966 survey then went on to ask the reason for moving to Cramlington. Within the new local authority estate employment was given as the primary reason for moving whereas housing was cited as the main attraction by a majority of residents on the private estates (see Table 2, p.192).

With regard to place of work the 1966 survey considered new and old areas and found that Cramlington provided employment for a minority of its resident workers, with 38.8% of workers from the old areas and 25.3% from the new areas employed at Cramlington. Thirty four percent of workers travelled to work in Newcastle and North Tyneside, i.e. the areas where many of their families had moved from.

Table 2 Reason for Moving to Cramlington 1966 survey

Zone No.	(Private Estates)		(New Local Authority Estate)
	07	08	09
Employment	21%	35%	48%
Housing	50%	42%	18%
Journey to Work	16%	10%	-
Opportunity to live in a new town	9%	8%	-
Other	4%	5%	14%

When a comparison was made between the old and new areas marked differences in job type and socio-economic status were evident (see Diagrams 1 and 2). Twenty four percent of workers in the old areas worked in mining compared with only 10% in the new. There was a slightly higher proportion of workers from the new areas in manufacturing industry, i.e. 29% as against 21% from the old areas. There was a higher percentage of workers from the new areas in all "service" categories with the exception of building construction. The new areas had 15.4% in the higher socio-economic categories, i.e. managers and professional workers compared with 1.6% in the old areas. Non manual work, i.e. (clerical and administrative) was also more prevalent in the new areas although there was a higher proportion of junior grade white collar workers in the old areas. Lastly, the new areas had a higher percentage in the foreman and skilled manual worker category while semi-skilled and unskilled workers predominated in the old areas.

Although the 1966 survey noted high levels of male employment, the percentage of females in work was similar for both new and old areas at 31.5% and 32.1% respectively. Questions were therefore

designed to assess the availability for work of female labour. The result was that amongst non-employed women in the new areas the number who expressed an interest in working was high. Fifty-six percent would have liked a part-time job and 7% a full time job.

However;

"most of these women were prevented from taking a job at the present time because of family commitments (i.e. caring for young children) and lack of nursery facilities.(23)

In the old areas 63% of women not in employment were not interested in employment. Thirty-three percent would have liked a part-time job and 4% a full-time job. The survey therefore considered that;

"the demand for work is significant particularly amongst the young women on the new estates. However, very few women are interested in full-time jobs the great majority wanting part-time jobs which allow them some time at home."(24)

Once again a division between the old and new areas was apparent when the type of job which the women wanted was compared. In the new areas the majority of women (72.7%) sought jobs in the shop, office and professional sectors whereas 33% of women in the old areas were not particular what jobs they did, while 15% wanted shop work and 23.4% factory work. Significantly, only 3.3% of women in the old areas expressed a preference for professional work against 13.6% in the new areas. Likewise 41% of women in the new areas wanted office work as opposed to only 12% in the old areas (see Table 3).

Table 3

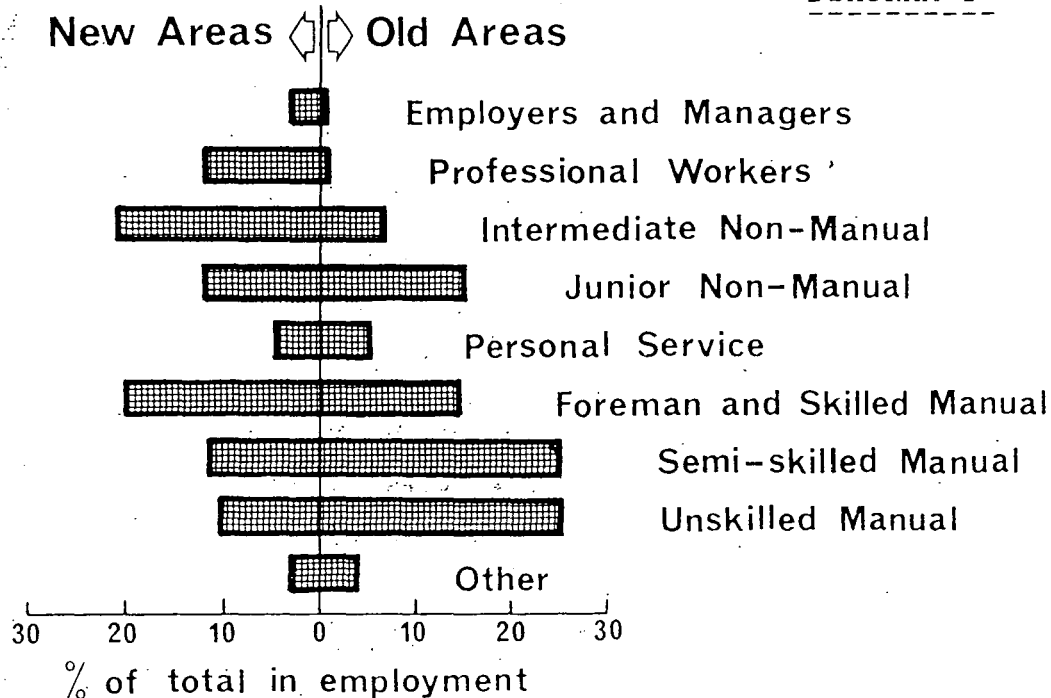
Percentage of Women Interested
in Particular Types of Work

1966 survey

Type of Work	New Areas	Old Areas
Shop Work	18.2%	15%
Office Work	40.9%	11.7%
Factory Work	7.6%	23.4%
Catering Work	1.5%	5%
Domestic	1.5%	5%
Professional	13.6%	3.3%
Not Particular	12.1%	33.3%
Other	4.6%	3.3%

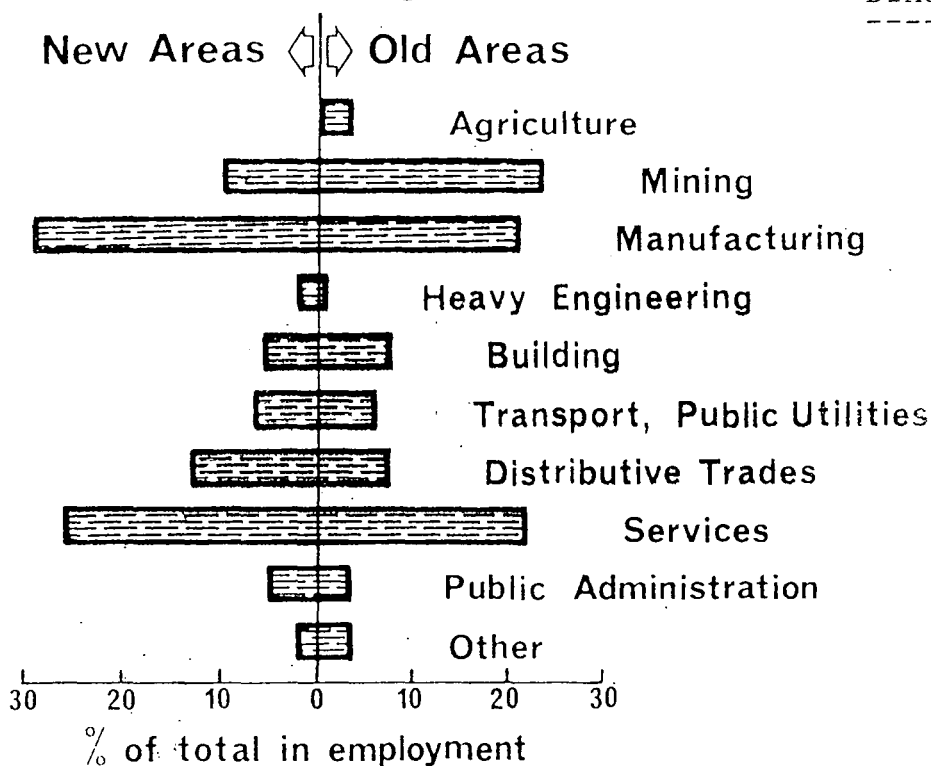
EMPLOYMENT STATUS

DIAGRAM 1.



INDUSTRIAL GROUP

DIAGRAM 2.



THE 1968 CRAMLINGTON SURVEY

The 1968 survey⁽²⁵⁾ rather than comparing new and old areas considered the new private housing and local authority estates (see Map 2).

Even at this relatively early stage of the town's development clear differences emerged between the local authority and private housing sectors. For example, within the owner occupied sector 16.7% of the working population worked in Cramlington compared with 55.6% from the local authority housing area. The majority of workers from the private housing area (60.9%) working in Newcastle and North Tyneside in contrast to 21.4% of workers from the council housing area (see Table 4).

Table 4 Place of Work 1968 Survey

Place of Work	Local Authority Housing Area			Private Housing Area			Total New Town		
	Males %	Females %	Total %	Males %	Females %	Total %	Males %	Females %	Total %
Cramlington	57.4	48.5	55.6	13.4	23.5	16.7	24.6	27.5	25.6
Rest of Seaton Valley	5.0	3.0	4.5	1.4	0.6	1.1	2.3	1.0	1.9
Blyth	5.7	-	4.5	2.2	2.4	2.3	3.1	2.0	2.8
Ashington, Bedlington, Morpeth and Newbiggin	11.5	3.0	9.7	3.1	4.1	3.4	5.2	3.9	4.8
Whitley Bay, Tynemouth Longbenton and Wallsend	9.8	12.1	10.3	21.5	23.5	22.2	18.5	21.8	19.5
Newcastle	8.2	21.3	11.0	39.6	37.0	38.7	31.7	34.4	32.4
Gosforth, Newburn and Castle Ward	0.8	6.1	1.9	8.1	6.5	7.6	6.3	6.4	6.3
Rest of Northumberland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Outside Country	-	3.0	0.6	3.4	1.2	2.7	2.5	1.5	2.2
Indefinite	1.6	3.0	1.9	7.3	1.2	5.3	5.8	1.5	4.5
Total Persons	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In terms of worker concentrations the owner occupied area was the location of higher socio-economic groups with lower categories concentrated in the local authority area. Within the private housing sector 66.6% of employed women worked in the junior non-manual category while the majority of women in the local authority area were spread across semi and unskilled manual and junior non manual groups (see Table 5). In the words of the survey report;

"the junior non-manual workers are the largest single group in the private housing area whilst in the local authority area foremen and skilled manual workers predominate. In fact the private housing area predominates in all non-manual groups, while the reverse is true in the local authority area."(26)

Table 5	Socio-Economic Groups			1968 Survey		
	Local Authority			Private		
	Males %	Females %	Total %	Males %	Females %	Total %
Employers and Managers	2.5	2.8	2.5	13.8	1.8	9.9
Professional	1.6	-	1.3	10.9	1.8	7.9
Intermediate Non-Manual and Own Account	1.6	2.8	1.9	11.2	15.7	12.7
Junior Non-Manual	3.3	33.3	10.1	23.6	66.6	37.6
Personal Services	-	-	-	0.6	2.9	1.3
Foremen and Skilled Manual	50.8	8.3	41.1	34.5	4.1	24.7
Semi-Skilled Manual and Agricultural	35.3	30.5	34.2	4.2	4.7	4.4
Unskilled Manual	4.1	16.7	7.0	0.6	1.8	0.9
Armed Forces	-	-	-	-	-	-
Indefinite	0.8	5.6	1.9	0.6	0.6	0.6
Total Working Population (No.)	122	36	158	356	171	527

Information on the previous tenure of residents resulted in the survey concluding that;

"The town is proving to be a great attraction to people who have never had a home of their own before, over a quarter of households having previously lived in privately rented property and one fifth being newly married couples setting home for the first time and attracted by reasonably priced housing."(27)

Again clear differences emerged between the two survey areas when previous tenure and place of residence was examined (see Tables 6 and 7). Forty one percent of the local authority residents formerly lived in council housing, 30% lived in privately rented property and 11% owned their own homes. This compared with 33% of private residents who previously owned their own home, 26% who lived in privately rented property and 27% who were newly married couples. Previous place of residence (Table 7) indicating that the local

Table 6 **Previous Tenure** **1968 Survey**

	Local Authority Housing Area %	Private Housing Area %	Total New Town %
Owner Occupied	10.7	33.0	26.6
Rented from Council	41.0	9.8	18.8
Rented Privately	30.2	26.0	27.2
Rented from N.C.B.	12.7	1.6	4.9
Rented through Employer	2.7	2.5	2.5
Others*	2.7	27.1	20.0
Total Households	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Others include newly married.

Table 7

Previous Place of Residence

1968 Survey

Previous Place of Residence	Local Authority Housing Area %	Private Housing Area %	Total New Town %
Newcastle C.B.	8.7	25.6	20.7
Tynemouth C.B.	6.7	5.5	5.8
Gosforth U.D.	-	5.2	3.7
Longbenton U.D.	-	10.1	7.2
Newburn U.D.	0.7	1.9	1.5
Wallsend M.B.	5.4	6.3	6.0
Whitley Bay M.B.	1.3	6.0	4.7
Ashington and Newbiggin U.D.'s	-	-	-
Bedlington U.D.	-	2.2	1.6
Blyth M.B.	-	3.3	2.3
Morpeth M.B.	-	0.8	0.6
Seaton Valley U.D.	70.4	14.1	30.4
Castle Ward R.D.	-	1.4	1.0
Rest of Northumberland	-	1.4	1.0
Rest of N. Region	-	1.5	1.0
South Tyneside	0.7	5.8	4.3
Rest of Durham	-	1.6	1.2
London and South-East	3.4	2.7	2.9
Scotland	-	1.1	0.8
Midlands	1.3	0.6	0.8
Rest of U.K.	0.7	3.0	2.3
Overseas	0.7	-	0.2
Total Households	100.0	100.0	100.0

authority area now took 70% of its residents from the Seaton Valley Urban District compared with 14% in the private housing sector who came from this area. Twenty three percent of the council estate residents came from North Tyneside and Newcastle a decrease of 32% on the 1966 figure of 55% of council households who migrated from these localities. However, when the Private sector area was taken into account, then in comparison to 1966, Cramlington had strengthened its ties with North Tyneside and Newcastle by drawing 61% of its residents from these areas.

THE 1975 CRAMLINGTON SURVEY

By 1975 the town had grown to approximately 6,600 dwellings of which 13% were sampled to produce detailed and comprehensive survey results. However, rather than simply going over the ground of the 1966 and 1968 surveys the 1975 survey⁽²⁸⁾ attempted to assess how far Cramlington had attained its objectives. But first it confirmed the trends identified in earlier surveys. For example, about half of Cramlington's working population commuted to Tyne and Wear. Four in every five of these commuters lived in Cramlington's private sector. About one third of the working population both lived and worked within Cramlington with one in every two of this group located in the local authority sector (see Table 8).

The origin of households moving to Cramlington indicated that 52% moved from Tyne and Wear while 21% came from South East Northumberland. A high proportion (46% of local authority sector households moved from Blyth Valley and Wansbeck districts compared with housing association and private sector households (both 15%). Eighteen percent of households came from outside the counties of Northumberland, Durham and Tyne and Wear (see Table 9). Overall,

however, when a comparison was made with the 1966 survey the proportion of incomers from Tyne and Wear was increasing from 40% in 1966 to 52% in 1975.

The former tenure of households moving to Cramlington showed an increasing proportion coming from the private rented sector with 38% of total families originating from this tenure, the equivalent 1968 figure having been 27%. About 28% formerly owned their own accommodation, approximately 19% of households were former council tenants and 8% had lived with relatives (see Table 10). Nearly a quarter of all private sector households had moved to Cramlington on marriage.

The 1968 survey had remarked that non-manual groups were concentrated and predominated in the private sector while skilled and semi-skilled manual workers predominated in the local authority sector. The 1975 survey confirmed this observation and noted that approximately 50% of head of households in the private sector consisted of non-manual groups compared with 9% in the Local Authority sector (see Table 11). Both the local authority and private housing areas as well as the housing association sector having roughly similar percentages of electrical and engineering worker head of households with economically non-active categories being highly concentrated within the council housing sector (see Tables 11 and 12). This last characteristic relating to the fact that the local authority area contained a high percentage of retired people (see Table 13).

Finally, the 1975 survey considered four subjects namely housing moves within Cramlington, preference for work in Cramlington, car ownership and housewives seeking work.

House movement within Cramlington was mostly within the local authority sector with 65% of families moving more than once. In contrast 84% of housing association families and 78% of private sector families had not moved home within Cramlington (see Table 14).

Nearly half of those working outside Cramlington would have preferred a job within the town (see Table 15).

More than 67% of all households owned at least one car, compared with a regional rate of 45% in 1974. However, this statistic reflected the increasing growth of Cramlington's private sector housing compared with other tenures since 30% of housing association households and 57% of local authority households but only 19% of private sector households did not own a car.

While the percentage of housewives not registered unemployed who were seeking work was small at 11%, 45% would have sought work given more favourable conditions. The 1975 survey therefore concluded, as had the 1966 survey, that women constituted a sizable labour pool (see Tables 16 and 17).

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EARLY SURVEYS

Pulling together the information gathered from the early surveys of Cramlington enables some provisional statements to be made about the New Town;

1. In the old areas surrounding Cramlington in 1966 Council housing was by far the major form of tenure provision. Within Cramlington itself while a new local authority estate had been built construction for private ownership was the larger tenure form making up 60% of all new housing.
2. In 1966 the old areas still had 24% of their economically active population working in mining.

3. The New Town was the location for a pool of female labour much of which while wanting to work was constrained by family commitments. Part-time work was therefore the preferred form of employment for many of these women. In 1975 38% of women in Cramlington worked full-time and 15% part-time, 33% were classified as housewives (see Table 18).
4. In 1966 within the 'new areas' containing two private estates and a local authority estate most women who would have sought work wanted jobs in the shop, office and professional sectors rather than factory work. By contrast 23% of women in the old areas preferred factory work with a further 33% not particular about what job they did.
5. While the New Town contained a broad range of socio-economic groups, women were concentrated in particular categories especially 'junior non-manual' and hardly represented at all in managerial, professional and skilled manual categories (see Table 5).
6. Within the new private sector estates the majority of the economically active commuted to work in Tyne and Wear. In contrast just over half of the workforce in the local authority sector worked in Cramlington.
7. Overall, in 1975, Cramlington was the place of work for a third of its total labour force, an increase of 8% over the 1966 and 1968 figures. However, most managers, professionals, intermediate non-manual and junior non-manual workers commuted to work in Newcastle and North Tyneside (see Table 20). The majority of semi-skilled workers (in 1968) being employed in Cramlington with skilled workers and foremen divided between Cramlington, Newcastle and North Tyneside (see Table 20).

8. Non manual workers predominated in the private sector estates as did the 'higher' socio-economic groups. On the local authority estates skilled and semi-skilled manual workers predominated. These same local authority estates being the location for 'lower' socio-economic groups and the economically non-active.
9. In terms of declining industrial sectors and their relation to newer sectors the 75 survey considered that;

"there was nothing to suggest that a significant number of migrants were being recruited from declining industries into the new manufacturing sector". (29)
10. The private sector estates drew their population mostly from Tyneside while the local authority estates had higher proportions of their populations from Seaton Valley and later Blyth and Wansbeck council areas.
11. First-time buyers and newly married couples constituted a significant percentage of private sector households as did buyers who had previously owned their own homes. Apart from this Cramlington drew a high proportion of its households from the private rented sector. However house movement within Cramlington's Private Sector was limited (see Table 14).
12. Just as socio-economic groups were differentially spread across tenures gross household income also varied with tenure so that in 1975 mean gross income for local authority households was £2,255 p.a., for housing association was £2,961 p.a. and for private sector households was £3,740 p.a. Within the private sector 61% of households had an income per annum of £3,000 and over, against 21% of local authority households. Twenty two

percent of local authority households had an income of less than £1,000 p.a. as opposed to only 2% of private sector households (see Table 21).

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EARLY SURVEYS

While the 1966 and 1968 surveys had nothing explicit to say about how far Cramlington had achieved its objectives the 1975 survey did make a hesitant attempt at assessment. A hesitancy caused by the fact that the town's objectives were;

"Often couched in a language which made judgement of their attainment difficult", and were "sometimes in conflict with one another".⁽³⁰⁾

However, insofar as Cramlington's objectives could be stated, the 1975 survey thought that they consisted of;

1. The creation of a new and varied economic base which would compensate for the decline of coal and which was not dependent upon any one industry.
2. The development over time of a self contained and socially balanced community.
3. The attraction of industry from outside the region.
4. The attraction of a mix of industries capable of self sustained growth, that is industries not so directly affected by downturns in the national economy.
5. The development of external economies with the rest of the northern coalfield.
6. Providing a focus for house building and industrial investment.

Then having outlined what it thought were the town's objectives, the survey considered that the notion of;

"general improvement emanating from a central growth point is not easily examined."(31)

Therefore on this and other matters such as the reliance upon "footloose" industry to create jobs or how long it would take for Cramlington to become self contained or the validity of the idea of self containment and its realisation in practice or whether particular industries were relatively unaffected by economic recession and if so which industries, the 1975 survey was diplomatically silent. A silence which extended to any discussion of the limits to planning in a free market economy. Instead the 1975 survey concluded that;

"Cramlington directly provided new employment for only a minority of its migrants."(32)

and that;

"Apart from short distance migrants moving into Cramlington's local authority sector, for most residents the New Town's role was that of a housing estate on the periphery of Tyneside."(33)

Given these observations Cramlington could hardly be said to be self contained. Moreover, the continuing high level of commuting had been;

"encouraged by the tenure distribution and by either inappropriate jobs or migrants with inappropriate skills."(34)

In other words, there was a lack of fit between the majority of Private Sector adult residents and the number and type of jobs available in Cramlington. In addition, the future range of job opportunities would;

"determine whether or not the pool of female labour was fully drawn upon."(35)

When the 1975 survey looked at housing it concluded that;

"Cramlington's impact on housing has been most notable for the opportunities it has accorded households wishing to buy their own home particularly first time buyers. However Cramlington's contribution towards improving housing conditions was not all that significant in the sense that the proportion of migrant households coming from houses deficient in amenities was not large. Of greater significance was the easing of congestion explicable in terms of the sizable proportion of migrants coming from the more limited accommodation of the private rented sector."(36)

This, however, was only part of the story since the survey evidence additionally suggested that for many migrants, who were previous home owners, a move to Cramlington was a step up the housing ladder. But when these migrants relocated to Cramlington movement within the town's housing market was limited. The new town, therefore, functioned as a staging post in that many households bought into its housing market, then, after a period, sold up and moved elsewhere in

the region. The length of residence statistics bearing out this transitional characterisation of the town since they consistently showed a large percentage of households resident in Cramlington for less than six years and a small percentage resident for longer than six years.

In the end the 1975 survey was evasive on the central issue of how far the town had met its objectives. An evasiveness achieved by silence on key matters but also by the re-interpretation of original objectives. Therefore the goal of self containment became a distant prospect that may be desirable but was not necessary. In the same way, while the high volume of commuting was regrettable, no appropriate level of commuting could be specified in view of the non necessity of self-containment. Moreover, although nearly 50% of those who worked outside Cramlington would have preferred to work in the town, this depended upon appropriate jobs being available. In this context the town had attracted new industry and the county would continue its efforts to publicise the town's advantages for capital. But what the survey did not say was that the county could not determine that the demand for work in Cramlington was matched by an equivalent supply of jobs and even less could the county determine that the type of work matched skills and wants.

In short the County Planners could not publicly admit the limits to planning although the survey itself was pregnant with the contradictions and disjunctions inherent in the form, structure and market context of the New Town.

Table 8

1975 Survey

Comparison of Workplaces by Sector and Industry (Percentages)

	Housing Association	Local Authority	Private	Grand Total
Proportion of total workforce working in:				
Cramlington	38.3	55.6	24.7	34.3
Tyne and Wear	45.1	20.7	56.8	45.9
Elsewhere	16.6	23.7	18.5	19.8
Total Workforce	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Proportion of manu- facturing workforce working in:				
Cramlington	58.9	73.6	36.5	51.0
Tyne and Wear	31.4	10.5	45.7	32.4
Elsewhere	9.7	15.9	17.8	16.6
Total Manufacturing Workforce	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Proportion of dis- tribution and service workforce working in:				
Cramlington	27.5	53.3	26.9	31.7
Tyne and Wear	50.0	28.3	59.2	55.2
Elsewhere	22.5	18.4	13.9	15.1
Total distribution and service workforce	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Proportion of public administration workforce working in:				
Cramlington	-	31.7	4.2	10.5
Tyne and Wear	84.6	34.0	76.1	66.5
Elsewhere	15.4	34.3	19.7	23.0
Total public admin- istration workforce	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 9

1975 Survey

Origins of Households Moving to Cramlington (Percentages)

	Housing Association	Local Authority	Private	Total
S.E. Northumberland	14.6	46.2	14.7	20.8
Rest of Northumberland	2.9	3.4	2.6	2.7
Tyne and Wear	60.1	32.8	56.5	52.2
Co. Durham	7.5	5.0	6.5	6.3
Elsewhere	14.9	12.6	19.8	17.9

Table 10

1975 Survey

Former Tenure of Households Moving to Cramlington New Town

Former Tenure	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Owner Occupied	49	14.1	79	10.9	923	34.9	1051	28.3
Local Authority	113	32.5	207	28.6	376	14.2	696	18.7
Private Rented	147	42.2	304	42.0	969	36.6	1420	38.2
Relatives	28	8.0	49	6.8	228	8.6	305	8.2
Other	11	3.2	85	11.7	149	5.6	245	6.6
Total	348	100.0	724	100.0	2645	100.0	3717	100.0

Table 11

Occupation of Head of Household

1975 Survey

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Farmers, Foresters, Fishermen	-		12	0.6	11	0.3	23	0.4
Miners and Quarrymen	-		85	4.0	46	1.1	131	2.0
Heavy Manu- facturing Workers	-		30	1.4	23	0.6	53	0.8
Electrical and Engineering Workers	88	21.9	446	21.1	1026	25.4	1560	23.8
Other Manu- facturing Workers	46	11.4	170	8.0	262	6.5	478	7.3
Construction Workers Painters, Plant Drivers	31	7.7	97	4.6	80	2.0	208	3.2
Labourers	10	2.5	121	5.7	46	1.1	177	2.7
Transport Workers Warehousemen	46	11.4	146	6.9	182	4.5	374	5.7
Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	67	16.7	91	4.3	969	23.9	1127	17.2
Admin/Professional and Technical Workers	62	15.4	97	4.6	1037	25.6	1196	18.2
Armed Forces	5	1.2	6	0.3	23	0.6	34	0.5
Not working	44	10.9	793	37.5	331	8.2	1168	17.8
Inadequately Described or Uncompleted	3	0.7	18	0.6	11	0.3	32	0.5
Total	402	100.0	2112	100.0	4047	100.0	6561	100.0

Table 12 Socio-Economic Group of Head of Household 1975 Survey

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Employers and Managers - Large Establishments	13	3.2	73	3.5	285	7.0	371	5.7
Employers and Managers - Small Establishments	23	5.7	18	0.9	148	3.7	189	2.9
Professional Employees	21	5.2	6	0.3	536	13.2	563	8.6
Intermediate Junior Non-Manual	23	5.7	55	2.6	376	9.3	454	6.9
Personal Service Workers	33	8.2	37	1.8	296	7.3	366	5.6
Foreman and Supervisors - Manual Workers	39	9.7	158	7.5	479	11.8	676	10.3
Skilled and Semi- Skilled Manual Workers	182	45.3	783	37.1	1391	34.4	2356	35.9
Unskilled Manual Workers	8	2.0	116	5.5	46	1.1	170	2.6
Own Account Workers with no Employees	8	2.0	-		68	1.7	76	1.2
Agricultural Workers	-		6	0.3	-		6	0.1
Members of Armed Forces	5	1.2	6	0.3	11	0.3	22	0.3
Economically Inactive	44	10.9	793	37.5	331	8.2	1168	17.8
Occupation Inadequately Described	3	0.7	61	2.9	80	2.0	144	2.2
Total	402	100.0	2112	100.0	4047	100.0	6561	100.0

The economically inactive category includes all those who, at the time of the survey, were retired, permanently sick or not then seeking employment.

Table 13

Tenure Profile

1975 Survey

	Housing Association	Local Authority	Private	North Region (1974) ¹
Population	1,292	6,198	11,595	
% of population:				
economically active ²	47.9	45.7	54.0	
permanently sick	0.9	1.4	0.3	
under school age	12.4	6.4	13.8	
under 15 years of age	35.9	26.0	28.8	24.0
at school after 16	0.5	0.6	1.0	18.5
over retirement	3.5	15.0	2.9	13.2
Unemployment rate percentage ³	2.9	6.7	1.8	4.7
Percentage of house holds with at least 1 car	69.9	42.9	80.3	44.6

Notes:

1. Source: Regional Statistics, No. 11, 1975
2. Including those in full and part-time employment and those registered as unemployed.
3. Numbers unemployed expressed as a percentage of all economically active.

Table 14

Moves within Cramlington

1975 Survey

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Not Moved	377	83.8	731	34.6	3146	77.7	4214	64.2
1 Move	44	10.9	609	28.8	661	16.3	1314	20.0
2 Moves	13	3.2	286	13.5	91	2.2	390	5.9
3 Moves	8	2.0	243	11.5	103	2.5	254	5.4
4 Moves	-		122	5.8	46	1.1	168	2.6
5 Moves	-		91	4.3	-		91	1.4
6 Moves	-		12	0.6	-		12	0.2
7 Moves	-		12	0.6	-		12	0.2
8 Moves	-		-		-		-	
9 Moves	-		6	0.3	-		6	0.1
Total	402	100.0	2112	100.0	4047	100.0	6561	100.0

Table 15 **Preference for Work in Cramlington*** **1975 Survey**

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Prefer Cramlington	170	45.8	645	54.9	1942	42.0	2757	44.7
Do not prefer Cramlington	201	54.2	529	45.1	2686	58.0	3416	55.3
Total	371	100.0	1174	100.0	4628	100.0	6173	100.0

* This question was only asked of those employed outside Cramlington who were present at the interview.

Table 16 **Housewives Seeking Work** **1975 Survey**

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Seeking Work	26	17.1	65	10.0	153	10.7	255	11.0
Not Seeking Work	126	82.9	586	90.0	1272	89.3	1984	89.0
Total	152	100.0	651	100.0	1425	100.0	2228	100.0

Table 17 **Housewives who would seek work given Appropriate Conditions of Work** **1975 Survey**

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Would Seek Work	73	57.9	210	35.8	610	48.0	893	45.0
Would Not Seek Work	44	35.0	181	30.9	585	46.0	810	40.8
No Reply	9	7.1	195	33.3	77	4.0	281	14.2
Total	126	100.0	586	100.0	1272	100.0	1984	100.0

Table 18

Work Status - Females

1975 Survey

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Full-Time Work	160	36.9	627	27.3	1756	43.5	2543	37.6
Part-Time Work	80	18.5	377	16.4	581	14.4	1038	15.3
Unemployed	10	2.4	49	2.1	23	0.6	82	1.2
Housewife	152	35.1	651	28.4	1425	35.3	2228	32.9
Student	3	0.6	12	0.5	57	1.4	72	1.2
Permanently Sick	3	0.6	12	0.5	11	0.3	26	0.4
Retired	26	6.0	566	24.7	182	4.5	774	11.4
Total	434	100.0	2294	100.0	4035	100.0	6763	100.0

Table 19

Work Status - Males

1975 Survey

	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Full-Time Work	361	91.4	1631	74.0	3773	90.4	5765	85.2
Part-Time Work	-		12	0.6	34	0.8	46	0.7
Unemployed	8	2.0	134	6.1	91	2.2	233	3.4
Student	3	0.8	24	1.1	57	1.4	84	1.2
Permanently Sick	8	2.0	73	3.3	23	0.5	104	1.5
Retired	15	3.8	329	14.9	194	4.7	538	8.0
Total	395	100.0	2203	100.0	4172	100.0	6770	100.0

Table 20

1968 Survey

Correlation between Socio-Economic Group and Place of Work

(Males and Females in the New Town)

Place of Work	Employers and Managers	Professional	Intermediate Non-Manual and Own Account	Junior Non-Manual	Foremen and Skilled Manual	Semi-Skilled Manual and Agricultural	Others
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cramlington							
and Rest of Seaton Valley	23.4	-	2.2	19.6	32.7	70.3	32.1
Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth, Newbiggin and Morpeth	10.6	3.1	15.5	2.1	8.3	11.3	11.9
Newcastle	25.6	81.3	51.2	43.3	26.1	-	16.7
Whitley Bay, Longbenton, Tynemouth and Wallsend	29.7	-	8.9	23.1	17.8	7.5	26.6
Gosforth, Castle Ward and Newburn	6.4	9.4	17.8	6.2	5.6	-	6.0
Others	4.3	6.2	4.4	5.1	9.5	1.9	7.1
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(No.)	56	44	70	214	195	77	29

Table 21

Household Gross Income*

1975 Survey

Income per Annum	Housing Association		Local Authority		Private		Grand Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Under £1,000	26	6.5	456	21.6	80	2.0	562	8.6
£1,000 but less than £1,500	28	7.0	225	10.7	182	4.5	435	6.6
£1,500 but less than £2,000	49	12.2	213	10.1	205	5.1	467	7.1
£2,000 but less than £3,000	121	30.1	573	27.1	878	21.7	1572	23.9
£3,000 but less than £5,000	140	34.8	377	17.9	1836	45.4	2353	35.8
£5,000 and over	23	5.7	79	3.7	627	15.5	729	11.1
No reply	15	3.7	189	8.9	239	5.9	443	6.7
Total	402	100.0	2112	100.0	4047	100.0	6561	100.0

* "Gross income" is income before all deductions. It includes all benefits, interest payments, grants and rental payments.

HOUSING AND LABOUR

The previous survey evidence pointed to a disjunction between living and working in Cramlington especially with respect to private sector residents. At the same time there was a problem of ensuring that house building and factory construction was synchronised so that in 1964 Elphick noted that;

"Factories are being constructed ahead of housing and it is imperative that housing both local authority and private is started this year if the population is to be accommodated near their place of work."(37)

The residential/place of work disjunction and the synchronisation problem reflecting the predominance of the private housing market and its relative autonomy from and disarticulation with the local labour market. Yet assembling a pool of labour was a necessary factor in attracting industry to the town and it is in this context that the local state became central in providing affordable housing for the workers on the industrial estates. But this function was itself not without problems, a joint committee report describing the council's thinking in this way;

"The District Council were extremely anxious to meet the needs of incoming workers and in the past when suitable houses had not been available they had bought them from the private developers for re-letting to key workers. In addition the need to sustain an expensive building programme to provide a 'pool' of rental accommodation was a heavy strain on local financial resources."(38)

The demand for council accommodation coming not only from 'key workers' but also arising from demographic change, slum clearance and the alleviation of overcrowding. In order to deal with these demands and financial pressures the district council adopted three strategies. First it went into partnership with other local authorities and reached an agreement with Dorran Construction Ltd to provide 713 industrialised houses for rent, 400 of which would be sited at Cramlington. These houses being earmarked for key workers. However, in April 1967 Dorran Construction went into liquidation and by September a £1.4 million tender from Bell and Leech was accepted for the completion of the programme. Only 13 houses having been built by Dorran before their liquidation.

Second, the Cramlington Joint Committee in November 1967 resolved to ask;

"the North East Housing Association or a similar organisation to undertake the provision of rented accommodation should the need arise."(39)

The council accepting responsibility for the housing of key workers nominated by industrialists and the Association providing for other industrial or white collar workers who did not want to buy a house. Therefore by 1969 the County Council announced the N.E.H.A.'s intention to build 1,770 houses with the first phase of 317 houses starting in 1970. But by 1972 the Association had decided not to proceed beyond the first stage although they would consider further development;

"in the event of future industrial expansion and an upsurge in demand for rented housing."(40)

Third, the district council was itself a source of mortgaging facilities for potential buyers, with money coming from central government, so that between 1967 and 1971 £1.7 million was provided as mortgage loans. However, as a source of all mortgages only 5% of Cramlington's owner occupiers received mortgages from the local authority. Nevertheless the district council considered its contribution to mortgage finance important and pressed central government to increase its quota of mortgage funds. The response of the Parliamentary Secretary concluding that;

"as part of an economy exercise the money available for mortgage advances had been reduced from £130 million to £30 million for 1968/69 therefore the quota award to the district council for 1969/70 was £40,123 (a reduction of 75% on the previous year)."(41)

This decrease in local authority mortgage funds causing the council to complain that;

"a slowdown in the rate of private house building means a slowdown in the development of the town as a whole."(42)

In short the relative autonomy of the private sector housing market increased the need for public sector housing provision in order to ensure a "pool of labour" assembled at a particular place. However the financial strain this imposed on the district council in turn forced it to seek partnership arrangements with other local authorities and a housing association in order to provide rented accommodation. The reality being that public sector housing did not stand on its own but was closely linked to local manufacturing

industry to the extent that the district council undertook to house workers nominated by industrialists. Indeed the provision of housing both private and public was held out to industrialists as an additional reason for locating in Cramlington. Once set up on the industrial estates the ability to nominate workers for housing gave company personnel officers, if they decided to activate it, an additional source of control over the workforce. Moreover, the fact that employment would also guarantee a house, gave Cramlington an added attractiveness for labour compared to other areas.

As we have seen there was a measure of overlap between working and living in Cramlington even within the private housing sector. For the County and District Councils the construction and sale of private housing was a priority so that in 1969 the Joint Committee noted that;

"the private developers had sold 1338 houses of which 1163 were completed. Sales were running at the rate of 40 a month and it was most important that this momentum should continue."(43)

In the event the momentum did not continue. New house building reaching a peak in 1976 and declining thereafter especially between the years 1980 and 1986 (see Table 21A). This slowdown in private sector housing was then reflected in revised time-scales and population targets. The actual population of the town in 1988 standing at 29,000 and an estimated population for 1996 suggested as 35,000 to 37,000. In other words the estimated population for 1971 of 39,000 would still not be achieved twenty five years later. Attempts at making long term population estimates were therefore abandoned and short term estimates scaled down. Essentially housing output was

determined by fluctuations in the market and this in turn meant ever shifting population estimates and time-scales for the completion of schemes.

Likewise when the time arrived in 1981 to think about the development of the North East sector of the town, market considerations were to the fore. The views of the private developers were sought by the County Planning Department and in an echo of the earlier discussions of the sixties the private developers' primary concern was that;

"their building activities should not be unduly restricted and that they should be as free as possible to develop in response to changes in the housing market."(44)

The Planning Department going on to say that;

"it is recognised that the builders should have reasonable flexibility in their activities but the resulting development should not be determined solely by market forces. Planning and social factors also need to be taken into account."(45)

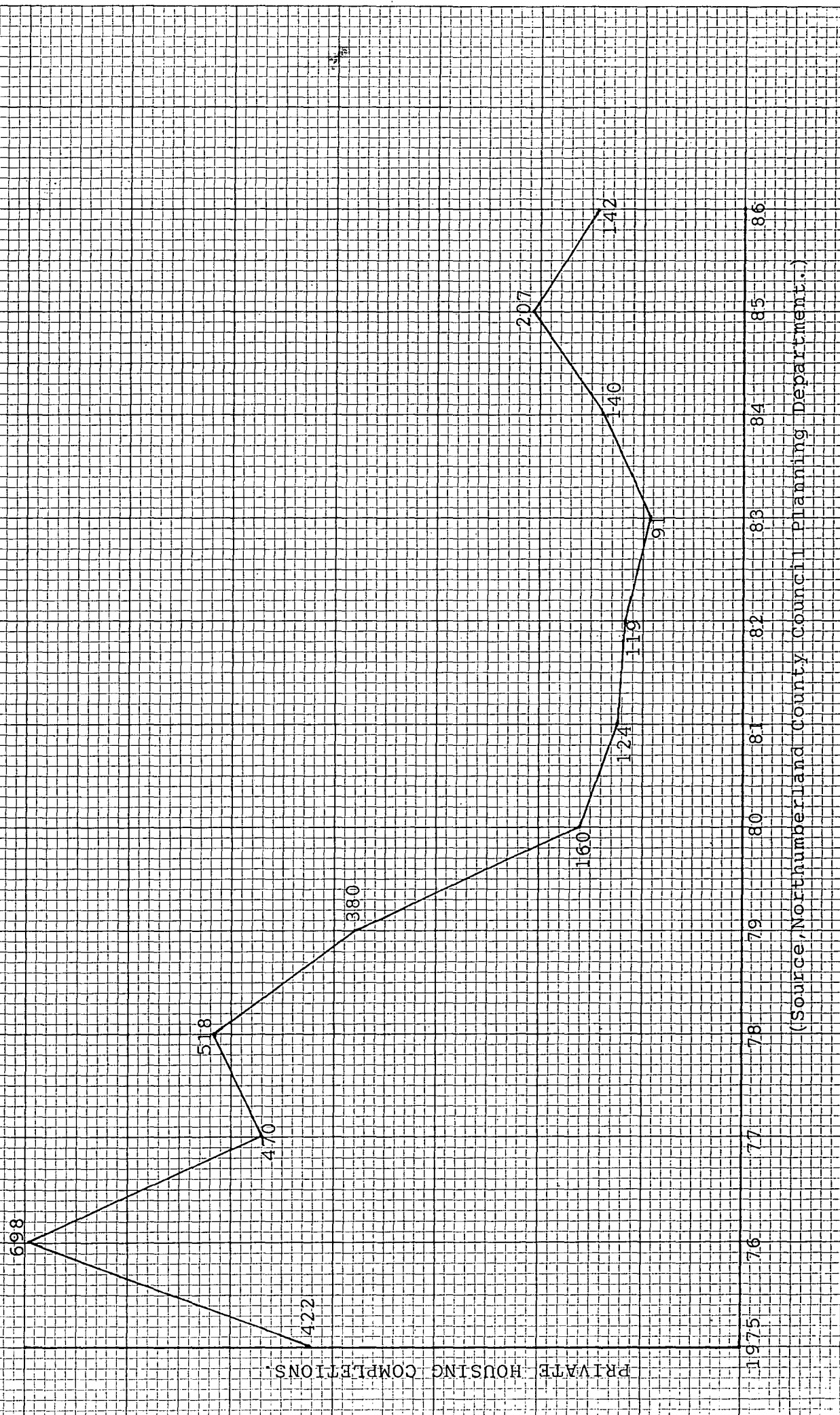
What is significant here is the dominance of the market rather than its sole determination and the acceptance of this dominance by the planning department so that planning's role was to modify and negotiate with capital in order that planning and social concerns were taken into consideration. The result was a phasing of development which would attempt to synchronise the building of housing, schools and community buildings. Moreover, the better more expensive housing would occupy the;

"more attractive sites with existing landscape features." (46)

While in order to meet the demands of the private developers;

"the majority of the sites have been identified for medium density housing in the medium price range comprising mainly one and two storey detached and semi-detached houses with some terraces." (47)

Despite this dominance of medium price housing, it would be incorrect to see the private housing sector as homogenous since Leech and Bell built new houses ranging in price from £34,500 to £79,000 (1988 prices) (48) while the private housing market had houses for resale in a range of £16,950 to £59,950 in 1988. (49) The private sector was therefore differentiated by price reflecting both the house type and differential capacity of individuals to enter the housing market.



(Source, Northumberland County Council Planning Department.)

EMPLOYMENT IN CRAMLINGTON

According to Census of Employment figures (see Tables 22, 22A and 22B) employment in manufacturing reached a peak in 1974 and then declined to 1976 followed by an upswing in 1977. Between 1978 and 1981 manufacturing employment shrunk by 32% with a loss of approximately 2,400 jobs. The addition of 660 manufacturing jobs over the next three years to 1984 hardly compensating for the past losses. The job losses affecting all categories of labour whether full-time males, full-time females or part-time females with the full-time male job total in 1984 down 29% from the peak year of 1975, full-time female jobs down 31% from 1974 and part-time female jobs down 70% from a small 1974 base figure.

Confidential information from the County Planning Department (see Table 22C) confirmed the trends revealed by the Census of Employment. The Planning Department figures showing employment on the industrial estates doubling between 1971 and 1974. Then, apart from an upturn from 1975 to 1977 jobs were lost at a steady rate to 1982 when once again there was a positive upwards movement representing a jobs gain. However, by 1987 the jobs total for the industrial estates was almost the same as the figure fifteen years earlier in 1972.

But even within the manufacturing sector job change was uneven. For example Wilkinson Sword reduced its entire male and female workforce by approximately 68% between 1973 and 1984 with the most dramatic reduction taking place from 1978 to 1981 (see Table 23). On the other hand Dunlop had increased its total workforce by 17% between 1973 and 1984 although its 1984 total employment figure was a reduction of 8% from 1978 (see Table 24). Within the textile sector total jobs decreased by 19% over the 1973/84 period but full-time

males disproportionately bore the brunt of this decline with male employment shrinking by 43% and full-time female employment increasing by 43% (see Table 25). Over the same period Fasson Adhesives had increased its total workforce by 48% (see Table 26) while Commercial Plastics had cut back its labour requirement from 1,643 in 1978 to 1,006 in 1984 or a drop of 39% (see Table 27). A cut which in this instance represented a 49% contraction in full-time female jobs and a 35% contraction in full-time male jobs although the loss of full-time male jobs was greater in absolute terms, i.e. 432 against 183 full-time female posts lost.

Distinctions can therefore be recognised between one plant and another in terms of those that had shed labour, those that had retained labour and those that had increased the numbers they employed. Equally, variations between plants is apparent with regard to the scale, timing and tempo of job loss although the period from 1978 to 1981 witnessed a particularly severe and across the board shake out of manufacturing labour.

Declining employment in industries such as cutlery and razor blade manufacture and new employment opportunities in more recently established pharmaceutical plants can be identified. In addition the manufacturing jobs total showed positive blips in 1974, 1977 and again in 1984. Overall, however, the direction of change was negative with manufacturing employment declining by 23% during the period 1973 to 1984. This suggests that new incoming manufacture was not numerous enough or sufficiently labour intensive to replace the jobs being lost. Indeed today's new employer was often tomorrow's closure or shedder of labour. Therefore the Lonrho Company, for example, when it took over Brentford Nylons Cramlington plant in 1977 employed 1700

people but by December 1984 it had reduced its workforce by cutting 400 jobs.

The 1974 job total was 11,738 of which manufacturing jobs made up 70% of this total. By 1984 the total jobs figure had dropped to 10,729 but manufacturing jobs now constituted only 54% of the total (see Tables 28 and 28A).

Over the ten years between 1973 and 1984 employment in services had increased from 21% of total employment to 41%. Within this category of 'services' female labour predominated while part-time female labour made up 36% of employment in services (see Tables 29 and 29A). But like manufacturing the service sector should not be seen as an undifferentiated category. Therefore although service employment doubled between the years 1973 and 1984 employment within the state sector decreased by 46% between 1978 and 1984 (see Table 30). Also, the majority of women were concentrated in four services categories, namely shopwork and distributive trades; hotels, pubs, restaurants and catering; professional and scientific services and insurance, banking and business services (see Tables 31, 32, 33 and 34).

Table 22 Employment in Manufacturing Industry at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	5,164	10	2,055	238	7,467
74	5,765	15	2,206	254	8,240
75	5,861	7	2,007	105	7,980
76	5,259	11	1,804	106	7,180
77	5,519	13	1,889	181	7,602
78	5,450	12	1,889	183	7,534
81	3,831	11	1,122	172	5,136
84	4,184	4	1,530	76	5,794

Table 23 Employment in Cutlery and Razor Blades at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	1,000	1	374	41	1,416
74	959	1	440	20	1,420
75	828	0	333	4	1,165
76	840	0	340	0	1,186
77	811	0	340	0	1,151
78	800	0	331	6	1,137
81	393	0	131	0	524
84	338	0	122	0	460

Table 24 Employment in Rubber Products at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	272	0	13	8	293
74	350	0	15	0	365
75	375	0	14	5	394
76	331	0	12	9	352
77	354	0	1	10	365
78	362	0	2	9	373
81	314	0	11	12	337
84	329	0	12	4	345

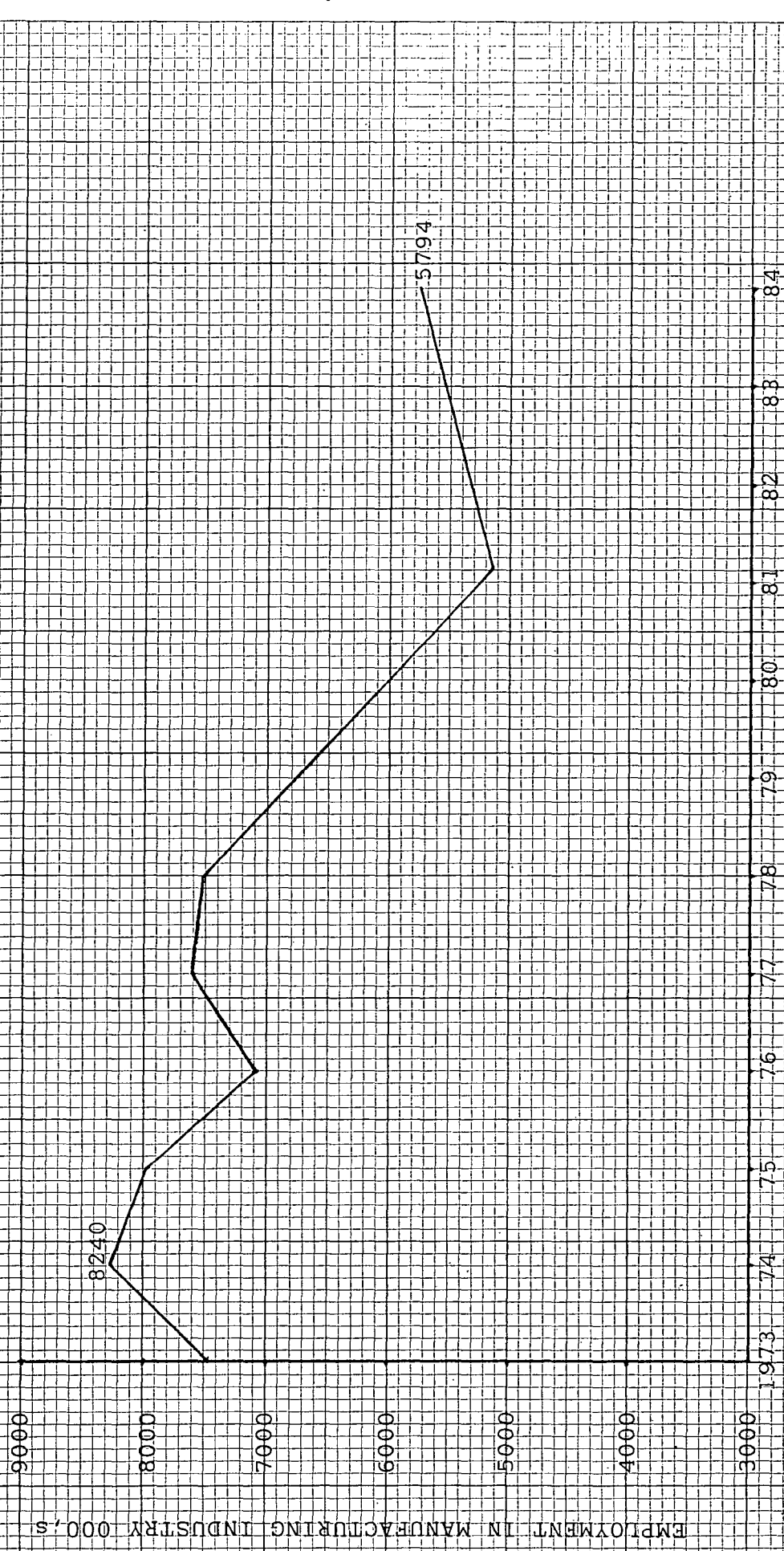


TABLE 22-A. EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY AT CRAMLINGTON 1973-84.
(Source, Census of Employment)



TABLE 22.B. EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY AT CRAMLINGTON BY GENDER
(Source, Census of Employment)

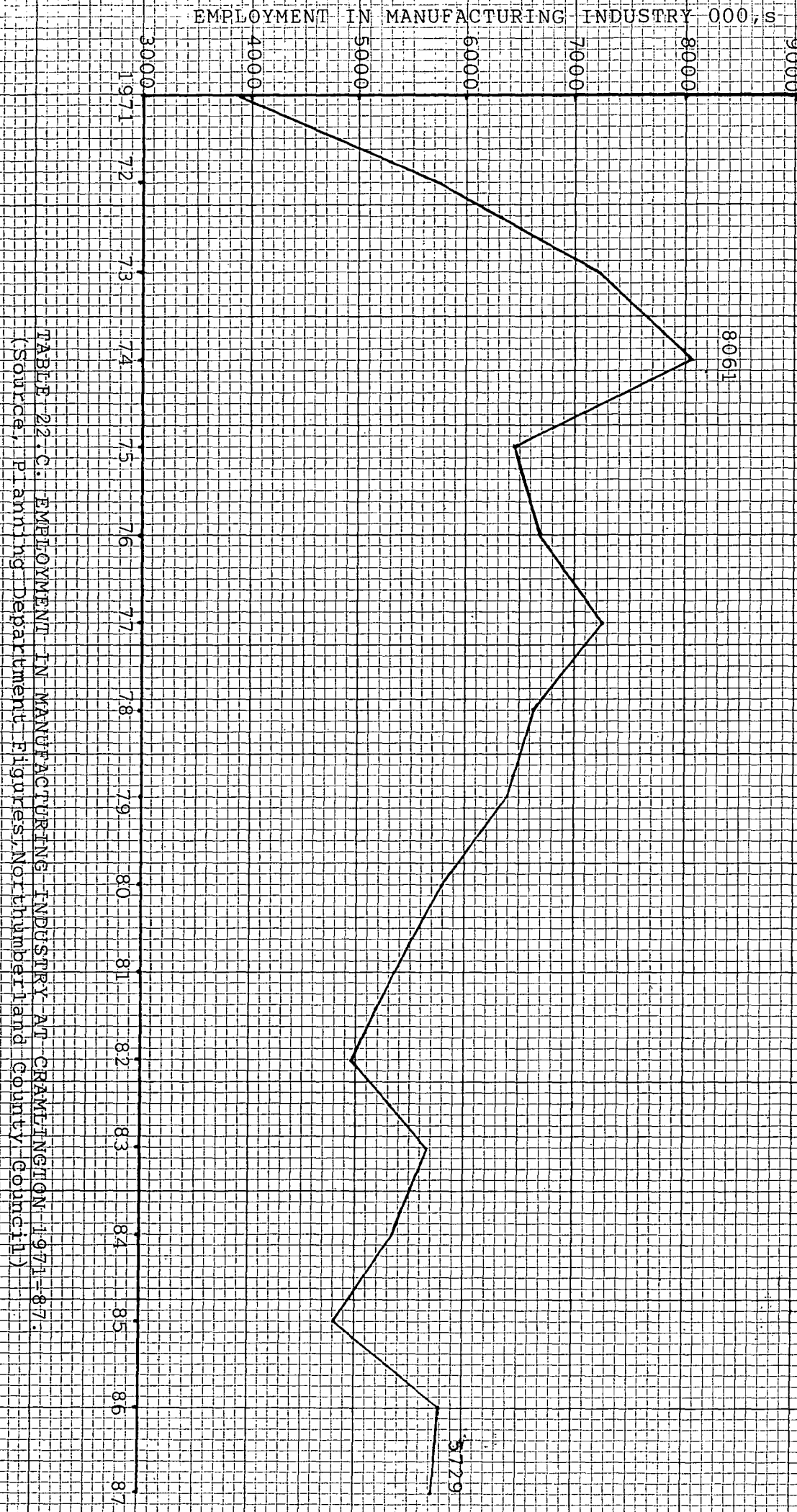


TABLE 22.C. EMPLOYMENT IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY AT CRAWFORDTON 1971-87.
(Source: Planning Department Figures, Northumberland County Council)

Table 25 Employment in Textiles at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	1,450	0	539	2	1,991
74	1,811	0	481	2	2,294
75	1,975	0	456	4	2,435
76	1,155	0	286	6	1,447
77	1,297	0	395	7	1,699
78	1,218	0	422	7	1,647
81	856	3	367	95	1,321
84	832	0	773	0	1,605

**Table 26 Employment in Formulated Adhesives/Sealants
 at Cramlington 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	170	0	21	4	195
74	208	0	21	4	233
75	217	0	18	5	240
76	231	0	26	5	262
77	247	0	24	4	275
78	252	0	20	7	280
81	245	0	20	6	271
84	262	0	24	2	288

Table 27 Employment in Plastic Processing at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	891	3	244	62	1,200
74	958	4	265	67	1,294
75	879	0	245	19	1,143
76	917	1	241	10	1,169
77	970	1	260	21	1,252
78	1,244	0	374	25	1,643
81	726	0	180	3	909
84	814	0	191	3	1,006

Table 28 Total Employment at Cramlington 1973/84

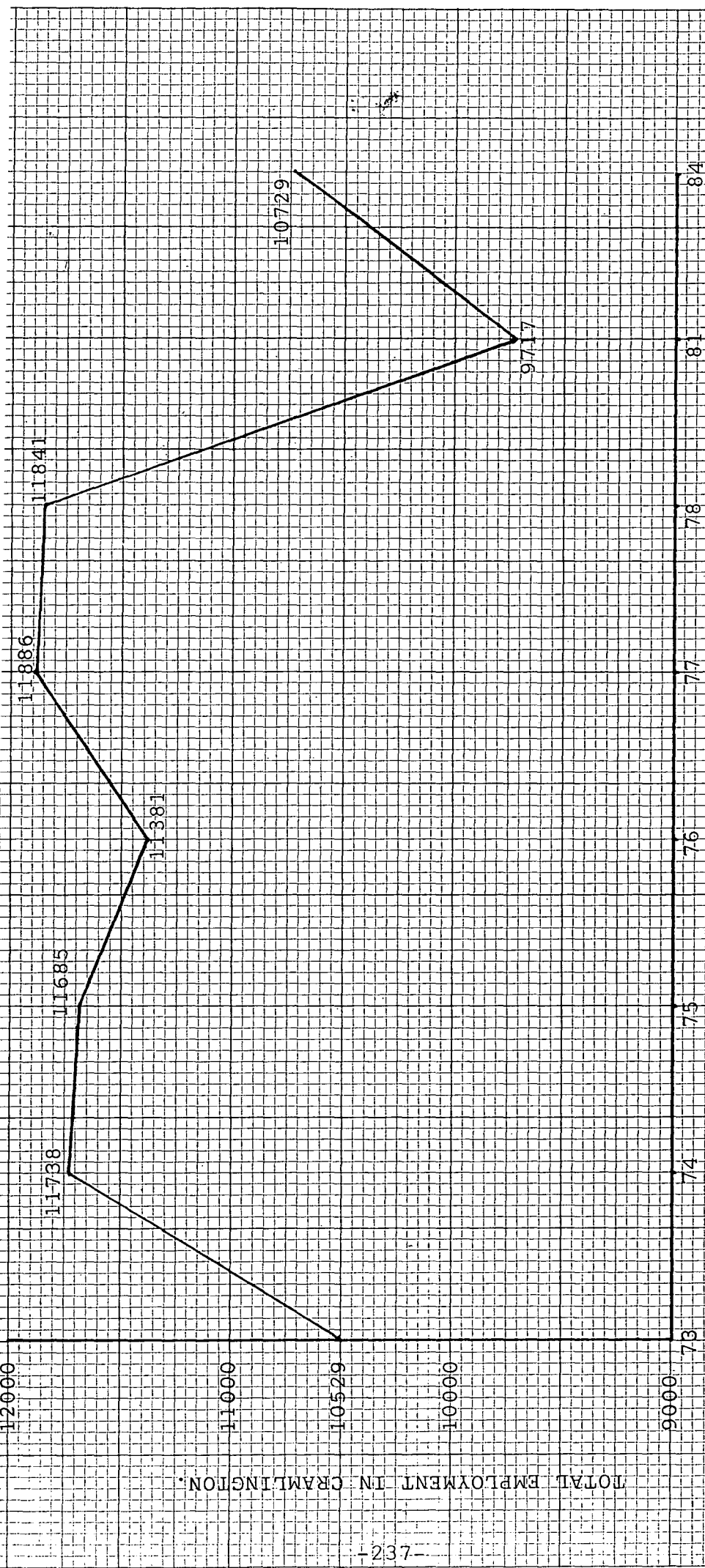
Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	6,746	154	2,657	972	10,529
74	7,398	146	2,945	1,249	11,738
75	7,591	169	2,717	1,208	11,685
76	7,211	191	2,663	1,316	11,381
77	7,354	201	2,821	1,510	11,886
78	7,432	242	2,716	1,460	11,841
81	5,774	201	2,071	1,671	9,717
84	6,267	220	2,570	1,672	10,729

Table 29 Employment in all 'Services' at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	743	138	585	722	2,188
74	714	126	715	983	2,538
75	1,051	158	699	1,096	3,004
76	1,052	178	840	1,196	3,266
77	998	186	911	1,314	3,409
78	1,290	229	817	1,267	3,603
81	1,481	188	918	1,475	4,062
84	1,647	204	1,013	1,583	4,447

**Table 30 Administration including National and Local Government,
Police and Fire Services at Cramlington 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	277	5	55	39	376
74	208	3	56	21	288
75	553	3	81	56	693
76	540	14	77	57	688
77	459	19	82	71	631
78	699	13	70	28	810
81	503	9	75	20	607
84	321	3	84	34	442



TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN CRAMLINGTON.

TABLE 28.A. TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN CRAMLINGTON 1973=84.
(Source: Census of Employment Figures)



TABLE 29.A. EMPLOYMENT IN "SERVICES" AT CRAWFORDTON 1973-84.
(Source, Census of Employment)

Table 31 Employment in Distributive Trades at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	197	26	158	210	591
74	153	27	169	239	588
75	147	48	132	256	583
76	166	66	167	266	665
77	135	57	172	286	650
78	137	102	178	340	757
81	171	59	162	383	775
84	398	39	231	384	1,052

**Table 32 Employment in Hotels/Pubs/Restaurants and
 Catering at Cramlington 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	18	49	29	130	226
74	27	58	45	134	264
75	30	61	32	173	296
76	31	50	34	207	322
77	33	55	44	230	362
78	33	58	26	260	377
81	38	64	45	299	446
84	54	87	86	274	501

Table 33 Professional and Scientific Services (including Education and Medical Services) at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	164	1	284	244	693
74	180	1	371	411	963
75	182	7	387	498	1,074
76	182	7	404	346	939
77	200	11	453	360	1,024
78	231	21	377	350	979
81	439	25	386	445	1,295
84	479	38	464	789	1,770

Table 34 Insurance, Banking, Business and Leasing Services at Cramlington 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	13	2	10	6	31
74	24	1	20	13	58
75	29	2	16	18	65
76	21	8	17	26	72
77	28	1	16	26	71
78	22	0	20	13	55
81	54	0	54	47	155
84	120	6	92	35	252

CASE STUDIES

Brentford Nylons/Lonrho Textiles

Christmas 1975 was not a happy time for the workers at Brentford Nylons' Cramlington plant, one of the North East's biggest textile complexes. In mid December Brentfords decided it needed to cut its two thousand strong workforce by a third. It was then a case of last in first out. All those workers with fewer than thirteen weeks employment with the company were dismissed and a further two hundred made redundant, a total of six hundred workers in all. The remainder of the workforce faced the prospect of three day working until the beginning of February 1976 when the company assured them of a return to full-time working. The factory union convenor hoping that following the redundancies and a period of short time working "things would get a lot better".⁽⁵⁰⁾ But for the present;

"We've got no choice but to accept these redundancies, its a matter of making sacrifices in order to save the majority of the jobs."⁽⁵¹⁾

Furthermore he had held talks with a sub-committee of Blyth Valley Council and concluded that;

"they are concerned, but short of buying two million nylon sheets there is nothing really they can do ... it's now a case of waiting to see what will happen."⁽⁵²⁾

What happened was a decision by Brentfords' divisional board of directors to extend the three day working to at least mid-February. Explaining this delay of a return to normal working a company spokesman said that;

"Sales are still below target and no big orders have been received."(53)

For the unions this decision was a bitter pill to swallow. A T.G.W.U. shop steward remarking that;

"Words can't express how disgusted I am ... we were promised a return to normal working on Sunday and the workers had built up their hopes. Now they've been completely dashed."(54)

Negotiations between management and unions followed with the company planning a phased return to five day working by the end of February and then only guaranteeing full-time work for a further two months. For the union this was yet another reversal;

"We wanted the five day week guarantee to be extended until the summer holidays. Then at least people who work at the factory would be assured of decent holiday pay. But we just couldn't get that sort of deal."(55)

Worse, however, was to come, for in the midst of the phased return to 'temporary' full-time work came the news that the company had been put in the hands of the Receivers.

What had led to the downfall of Brentfords, a privately owned and secretive family firm, was a combination of external pressures and internal responses and decisions. First, generalised recession with customers cutting back of spending contributed to a drop in sales. Second, other textile groups developing and promoting new lines in printed and polyester cotton sheets ate into Brentfords already

declining market share. Third, Brentfords had concentrated on the British market and failed to develop overseas markets. Brentfords was, therefore, faced with a crisis of falling sales, falling profits and shrinking cashflow despite prices 50% below those of competitors. The company's response was to invest in new machinery in order to produce new product lines so as to compete with competitors' new products. But in order to buy new machinery, in a context of falling sales and profits, money had to be raised by some means. That means was through saving on the wages bill by cutting the labour force, by borrowing from the bank and by delaying paying bills. However, this was a high risk strategy and when creditors, particularly Barclays Bank, lost confidence in Brentfords' capacity to turn the company around it called in its loans. Unable to repay loans while continuing to trade the company asked to be taken into receivership.

This time it was not only the workforce but also the local Brentfords' management who were shocked since;

"the first time the local management knew of the decision was when a telex message from the main board was handed to Mr. Gosling, the deputy managing director, saying that the directors had asked the firm's bankers to call in the receivers ... only the day before local management had been saying that orders were picking up and the future was brighter than for some time."(56)

In the face of the uncertain future the T.G.W.U. convenor signalled the unions' position;

"It's up to us now to prove to the Receiver that we are people of commonsense, fully prepared to co-operate with the local board and to prove to him that the factory can be a major success. We are going to have to sell ourselves to him in this way."(57)

Effectively, Brentford Nylons was now on the open market and waiting to be bought. The local authority, fearing that the company might close for the want of a buyer, offered the inducement of a rates exempt year in the hope of encouraging a purchase. The main union at the plant, worried by reports that both the Spirella Group and Courtaulds had shown an interest in the company, feared wage reductions and asset stripping if either took over Brentfords.

It was against this background that the local T.G.W.U. branch and Brentfords Cramlington management presented a forty-two page business plan to Eric Varley, the Industry Minister, proposing a joint management worker purchase of Brentfords. This was followed up with a purchase bid of £11 million of which £3 million was a loan from merchant banks and the remaining £8 million a loan request to the Department of Trade and Industry under the Industries Act.

Yet despite these moves the Government, on the 26th June 1976, announced that it had agreed to sell Brentford Nylons to the multi-national Lonrho Corporation for £9.8 million. The purchase price being met equally by Lonrho and the D.T.I. with the D.T.I. advancing Lonrho a secured loan of £4.8 million free of interest for the first year of the loan period. Commenting on the deal, Edward du Cann, a Conservative M.P. and a director of Lonrho, said that;

"We have a perfect right to use the facilities of the Industry Act and the Government is ready to trust us. We did not go to the Government they came to us through the Receiver. He made it clear that the money was there for a potential buyer whoever it was."(58)

But the Government's acceptance of the Lonrho bid did not come as a surprise to the Joe Wright the T.G.W.U. convenor at Brentfords. He had attended a meeting with the junior industry minister Lord Melchett on the 24th May and recalled that;

"Lord Melchett wanted our views on Lonrho and we said if they are interested in us we are interested in them ... we stressed our anxiety to co-operate and asked for assurances that the buyer would take on the company as a whole including factories at Cramlington, Felling and Greenock, retain existing wage levels and guarantee job security."(59)

Blyth Valley council in the person of its leader Councillor George Adams continued to be worried about job prospects. Asked about the deal he hoped that;

"In view of the substantial loan from public funds, the Government had made it clear to this company that they expect everyone's job to be preserved."(60)

For Edward du Cann speaking on a flying visit to Newcastle the deal with Lonrho would;

The Minister of State for Industry responding to left criticism claimed that Lonrho had made the only meaningful offer and in the circumstances the Government;

"felt this was the most appropriate and cheapest way of saving jobs."(67)

This statement along with the support for Lonrho from the regional leadership of the T.G.W.U., the Northern group of Labour M.P.'s and the Brentfords workforce effectively put an end to further questioning of the deal.

Now that the Lonrho take-over operation was complete the T.G.W.U. felt reassured by the company's positive statements regarding job security. The fact that the deal included the Felling and Greenock plants as well as Brentfords' retail outlets was an additional cause for optimism. Furthermore, the administrative and management staff necessary for the whole operation would be based at Cramlington. This led the local T.G.W.U. convenor to remark that;

"These are very genuine people. We won't be run by remote control as in the past."(68)

At first T.G.W.U. optimism seemed well founded. In August 1977, the Evening Chronicle was able to report that over the last year Lonrho had taken on four hundred workers bringing the Cramlington labour force to 1,700 and the number employed at Felling to 350.(69) By March 1978 it was a different story but one with a familiar sound. Lonrho intended to permanently close the Greenock and Felling factories, temporarily close the Cramlington factory for two weeks and then put the plant on a three day week until the end of May. The

unions' response was one of resigned acceptance, the T.G.W.U. convenor stating;

"If we went on strike or held a sit in we wouldn't get paid. Three days work is better than nothing. But the workers are very bitter about the whole thing. They remember the Lonrho directors coming up to see us when the company took over and promising job security."(70)

Speaking in 1984 and looking back over the previous eight years, the managing director of Lonrho's Cramlington operation had this to say;

"In some ways it was worse than starting on a green field site because we inherited negative standards and expectations from the workforce and that was unacceptable. However, an eight year programme of efficiency drives, product development and an expansion of our retail sector is now paying off. Productivity has been built up and now it's reasonable. We have got back into profitability."(71)

This increase in productivity had been achieved by first closing the Greenock and Felling plants and concentrating production at Cramlington. Then the Cramlington labour force was reduced in size. Yet in 1984 the company had 670 of its 690 looms running whereas two years earlier only 440 looms were operating. In August 1977 the Cramlington plant employed 1700 people but by December 1984 the figure had fallen to 1287. So by 1984 the company was producing more with fewer workers. At the same time a rolling investment programme was steadily allowing new technology to be installed. For example in 1982

a new computer system automatically monitored the performance of all the looms, carried out work studies and set work loads for operators as well as controlling the dispensing of dyes. By itself this technology was responsible for pushing productivity up by 20%. Meanwhile in the hemming department an automated system saved time but increased the machinists' workload by manoeuvring large pieces of material into place ready to be stitched.⁽⁷²⁾

The general picture then was one of rising investment in new technology, an increasing subordination of worker to machine, rising productivity and a declining number of workers employed overall.

Exquisite Knitwear

While Brentford Nylons was taken over by Lonrho, Exquisite Knitwear's Cramlington plant went down without a trace in 1976 with the loss of 150 jobs. Only six years earlier it had been a different story. Then, having just moved into a Department of Industry advance factory at Cramlington, Exquisite received 3,500 applications for the first 60 jobs it advertised. In a publicity leaflet designed to recruit its labour force the company offered a bright secure future;

"Above all else, a job at Courtaulds Exquisite Knitwear factory offers you security with a good weekly wage and employment throughout the year."⁽⁷³⁾

Shortly afterwards the company opened another knitwear plant at Ashington. By 1976 Exquisite had nine U.K. production units located in Northern Ireland, the North East, Leicester and the London area. But Exquisite, being part of the Courtaulds group, was only a small cog in a much bigger operation. In April 1976 only six years after opening the workforce received the news that the Cramlington plant was

to close. None of the workers would be transferred to other factories. Sir Arthur Knight, the chairman of Courtaulds, explained the situation as follows;

"Our warehouses are full and one cannot go on making stock in an industry where we cannot predict what the customer will wish to buy in eight months time. Indeed the particular fabrics knitted at Cramlington have been among the worst hit in a badly hit sector of the textile trade ... The Company had hoped the market would have improved. It had not and there was no sign of a large upturn in the near future. This particular part of the business could not be separated from the general fortunes of the U.K. textile industry and the problems the Company had at Cramlington reflected difficulties throughout the group."(74)

Courtaulds' troubles, a symptom of which was overstocking, can be traced back to several sources. First, the boom years of the late 50's and 60's saw Courtaulds expanding rapidly through takeover and by investing in new plant and machinery. New factories were set up at Skelmersdale and Spennymore for example. In many of these developments the company took full advantage of any grants and financial assistance available. At Spennymore, for instance, the company received £6 million in the form of grants while at Cramlington a different form of assistance was available in the shape of a D.T.I. advance factory unit. Lord Kearton, then chairman of Courtaulds, described the logic behind the company's acquisitions in Lancashire;

"We'd become very concerned by the way in which Lancashire was made up of a number of small firms. We thought we'd try to bring together a large grouping to provide a major cotton spinning combine, much bigger than anything existing and of considerable strength. We'd no save Lancashire attitude. What we were concerned about was making Courtaulds more dynamic and more prosperous and developing its export trade."⁽⁷⁵⁾

By 1974 the C.I.S. report had this to say of Courtaulds;

"In its short history it absorbed more than 800 companies. Today it runs 500 manufacturing units in 230 different locations, it has 100 factories outside the U.K.; it has 21 major subsidiaries in Britain and another three in France, one in Canada, two in the U.S.A., two in Australia and three in South Africa."⁽⁷⁶⁾

But just as the 50's and 60's witnessed Courtaulds expansion the "developing countries" were installing capacity in textile production many with the aid of I.M.F. and World Bank loans. Then came the 1973 Arab oil price hike and economic recession as the world market shrank. Production for the domestic and European market was being undercut by cheaper textile goods coming from the far east. An import process encouraged by the very structure of British textile retailing. As Allan Nightingale, head of Courtaulds' textile division, explained;

"Our retailing sector is such as that we can suck in imports like nobody's business."⁽⁷⁷⁾

Ian MacArthur, director of the British Textile Confederation, adds;

"Fourteen buying groups account for 55% of cross counter sales. A foreign salesman can make two calls a day for seven days and have access to 55% of the market."(78)

With a shrinking market and increasing import penetration Western textile producers faced a huge over-capacity crisis. Looking back on three years, Sir Christopher Hogg (present Courtaulds Chairman) described the company's response;

We bit the bullet and emerged blinking into the sunlight. He took out a lot of capacity which immediately helped others."(79)

The effect this action had on jobs was horrifying. Between 1973 and 1984 Courtaulds scrapped 60,000 jobs mainly in Britain's already hard hit old industrial areas as it contracted the British end of the business by £750 million. Among the casualties of the restructuring in response to crisis was Exquisite Knitwear's Cramlington and Ashington plants followed by Courtaulds' modern plants at Skelmersdale, Spennymore, Northern Ireland and Preston. Ironically, the Spennymore plant when it opened had been the jewel in the crown of Co. Durham's modernisation strategy just as Exquisite Knitwear's Cramlington and Ashington plants were hailed as part of Northumberland's success story in attracting new employment to the county. But while the union and the workforce at the Spennymore plant refused to accept wage cuts, short-time working, reductions in the workforce and plant closure even going so far as to initiate a campaign to save the factory, the Cramlington and Ashington workers offered no resistance. It was a choice between dying on your knees or

standing and fighting. But whatever the choice factory closure and loss of jobs seemed inevitable.

With hindsight the scrapping of capacity can now be seen as one element in a wider restructuring and re-organisation strategy so that by 1988 the talk in the Courtaulds' boardroom was not of the human costs involved in such a strategy but of a slimmed down and rejuvenated British textile industry. A rejuvenation which had a number of aspects to it. First the junking of capacity and shedding of labour. Second, the widespread adoption by Courtaulds and others of new technology. Third, changes in the retailing and market end of the textile circuit production and fourth a shift to "offshore production". Considering a number of these factors in greater detail in order to bring out their inter-linkage.

Walk along Northumberland Street in Newcastle and you find "Next" clothes store. Around the corner at the Monument was "Next to Nothing", selling similar clothes at half the cost. The difference is that fashion has moved on and clothes that were in "Next" have been shifted to make way for new items and new ranges. The emphasis is now on design, colour co-ordination, fast turnover and the ever incessant stimulation and refinement of consumers' wants and desires.

It is at this point that the industries shift into high technology articulates with the new technology in the high street. For as a result of investment in West German, Austrian and Italian machinery the industry has been able to take advantage of the new technological developments in the high street which have spread beyond Next to big chain stores such as Marks and Spencer.

In real terms the introduction of new technology means that a store can run out of a fast selling item on a Tuesday and use its

electronic point of sale machine to order a new batch which will arrive in some cases before the weekend. For more complex clothing products the response time of the industry is just four weeks.

The effect of this has been to neutralise the cost advantage of the third world and newly industrialising countries in certain segments of the market. For example, a supplier in Hong Kong would take eight to twelve weeks to supply an item that would take four weeks to obtain from a domestic manufacturer.

Going hand in hand with this fast response time is greater attention to design, packaging and marketing so that all the big textile companies are building up design teams. The logic behind this development connecting with the need to win and keep markets. As Allan Nightingale explains;

"There are two defences against low cost importers, the use of technology to speed up response time and to reduce costs and greater differentiation through good design."(80)

However, it is in those clothing elements requiring a high labour component that far east producers have an advantage. Seventy percent of the U.K. shirt market, for example, is dominated by far east imports. The problem here being that labour is needed to sew on the collar and sleeves. But again Courtaulds along with other European manufacturers are working on a robotics project which will undertake sewing tasks and in this way compete with low labour cost producers.

In the meantime another response to the far east producers has been to make items with a relatively high domestic labour cost component " "offshore". Courtaulds, for example, already manufactures

underwear in Morocco, bras in Tunisia and knitwear in Portugal. These items then find their way back on to the U.K. market. In other words what was once produced by Courtaulds at Cramlington and Ashington is now produced by Courtaulds in Portugal.

Ronson Products

In 1967 the Ronson Corporation of America established a subsidiary, Ronson Products, on the Bassington Industrial Estate in Cramlington. Another subsidiary plant was opened at North Shields. The Cramlington factory assembled electrical shares and hairdriers while the North Shields plant assembled lighters. By 1971 the Cramlington workforce numbered 500 with another 250 employees at North Shields. Of these 750 Ronson employees 500 or 66% were women.

By February 1981 the Cramlington plant had closed. However, over its fourteen year history the plant, in the columns of the local press, became synonymous with trouble. Some episodes stand out.

December 1971, for example, saw the breakdown of pay talks with the Cramlington management refusing to go to arbitration. Weekly wages with bonuses for assembly workers stood at £19 for men and £14 for women. The T.G.W.U. was asking for an increase of £4 per week across the board on basic rates. Explaining the claim a T.G.W.U. official said that;

"We are asking for a wage increase in order to bring Ronson's basic rates of pay into line with a reasonable living wage."(81)

Now that the pay talks had broken down the workers' response was to impose an overtime ban and stage lightning stoppages. In other words, to disrupt the attainment of normal output. The company in turn

justifying its offer of a £1.25p wage increase in terms of the costs it could bear. According to the managing director;

"The company could not afford the increases being claimed and many companies who had conceded large wage increases had later to make redundancies in order to prune costs."(82)

The implication was clear. If you press for higher wages than the amount offer, redundancies will inevitably follow, therefore moderate your demands or suffer the consequences. Nevertheless the workforce pressed on with its overtime ban and campaign of stoppages. The company reacting by laying off fifty-three workers on the grounds of falling output. This in turn provoked a stay away from work by all the assembly workers at the Cramlington plant and sympathy action from the North Shields workers who walked off the job. The workers from both factories then voting by a three to one majority in favour of staying out for one week and demanding that their claim go to arbitration. Effectively both factories were now at a standstill. The only people turning up for work being staff, technicians and skilled workers at Cramlington.

At the end of the week's stoppage the company agreed to take back the fifty-three workers it had laid off and re-open wage negotiations. Eventually the union settled for something less than its £4 per week claim and the company something more than its initial offer of £1.25p increase.(82)

Two years later in January 1974 a strike by thirty-one A.U.G.W. electricians and engineers at the Cramlington factory entered its twentieth week. Again it was a case of low pay. This time the A.U.E.W. divisional officer explained that;

"The men are concerned about the low level of wages paid by Ronson and the Government Phase III policy which restricts any immediate increase."(84)

During their twenty week strike the servicing and setting of machinery was done by management staff. Even so production was down by 20%. Finally, another compromise pay deal was worked out and the men returned to work.

Spring 1975 brought the first hint that the Ronson company was in trouble. But the signs were contradictory. On the one hand a new extension to the Bassington factory at Cramlington was nearing completion, on the other one hundred redundancies were announced almost all of them women. The managing director blamed falling sales for the redundancies;

"Sales have been falling and the V.A.T. increase from eight to twenty five percent on electrical goods like hair driers and shavers which we make here, will hit us even harder ... Like many companies we have cash flow problems. We are over manufacturing, not selling and not getting money in."(85)

Once again the local authority was taken by surprise, the Mayor of Blyth saying;

"Only a fortnight ago there was a meeting of industrialists in the area and they were fairly optimistic about the future. This has come out of the blue."(86)

Meanwhile the job centre manager was pointing to changed times;

"A year or two ago we could have placed women in jobs almost straight away in this area. But times have changed. It will take several weeks now."(87)

Over the next five years the main union, the T.G.W.U. reluctantly acquiesced in what was to be a steady trickling away of jobs so that from a high point of 500 employees at the Bassington factory in 1975 the workforce had contracted to 258 by 1980.(88) But what the union was not prepared to go along with was inadequate pay and differential treatment so that in April 1980 production workers began what was to be a twelve week strike. Commenting on the situation the T.G.W.U. branch secretary said;

"Management had been warned that if other sections got a pay increase our members would also expect it. The craftsmen have just been given a rise linked to a productivity deal so now we want a fair crack of the whip. The management says there is a money crisis and we do accept there are cash flow problems at Ronson. But our members are fed up being treated like second class employees."(89)

Then in the middle of the strike came the news from Ronson's Surrey headquarters of a series of belt tightening measures including redundancies at Ronson's Isle of Wight factory, cuts in advertising and the cancellation of all but vital incoming supplies. Clearly the company's position was worsening.

It was against this background that following negotiations with a representative from Ronson's headquarters that the T.G.W.U. accepted a flat rate pay deal rather than the productivity deal it had wanted and called off the twelve week strike.

By now the writing was on the wall and in November 1980 Ronson announced the closure of its Cramlington factory as part of a last ditch rationalisation plan. A plan that meant that the shaver assembly unit and 125 jobs were to be transferred to the North Shields factory. The remaining 133 workers became redundant. A company spokesman explaining that;

"The difficult trading position had intensified and the attempt at reorganisation was to put as many sections as possible in one place and prevent resources being thinly spread."(90)

The chairman of the regional T.U.C. commenting on the restructuring after a meeting with Ronson's English management;

"They are strictly interested in cash savings not about the fate of workers thrown on the scrap heap ... I would now plead with Ronson U.S. to overrule their British management and consider other options."(91)

That plea fell on deaf ears and the Cramlington factory closed although not before the workforce had won better redundancy payments by threatening to stop machinery leaving the doomed factory.

But the Ronson story did not end here for in August 1981 it was the turn of the North Shields factory to suffer uncertainty. This time the company's bank, Barclays, had called in the Receiver considering that;

"their support for Ronson had reached a level well beyond normal banking limits."(92)

Ronson it now transpired had accumulated a £9 million debt. Part of the explanation for that debt could, as the Financial Times observed, be accounted for by the fact that;

"The U.S. parent company is believed to have borrowed heavily from Ronson Products U.K."(93)

The first move the Receivers made was to cut another 627 jobs from Ronson nationwide with 77 jobs going at the North Shields factory. All this added to the air of uncertainty and speculation. For the workers who had moved from Cramlington to the North Shields plant this was the second time in the space of a year that they had received redundancy notices. It was no big surprise but that did not stop feelings of resentment;

"Everyone knew that the company was having difficulties so it wasn't really a big shock. But the thing that upset me was the lack of help they are offering people who have been made redundant. A simple letter explaining our rights more fully would have made things easier."(94)

The Regional T.U.C. voiced its fear about asset stripping and confidently expected the downturn in lighter sales to pick up. The first priority of the Receiver, however, was to sell Ronson as soon as possible. In September 1981 Ronson Products U.K. was sold for an undisclosed amount to what the Financial Times described as "a little known private company called Carwain."(95) Its chairman, a Mr. Jeffrey Port, had been discharged from bankruptcy in 1979 and now

operated from a suite in Grosvenor House, Park Lane in London's West End. Even a public relations company fronting for Mr. Port had to admit that;

"it hadn't heard of Carwain until last week."(96)

When Mr. Port did speak he talked of saving jobs by his own personal efforts. Meanwhile Ronson U.S. was quick to spot an opening when it saw one and sold some of its subsidiaries in Canada, Mexico and Italy to Carwain for £1.6 million and its Australian subsidiary for an undisclosed sum. Explaining these moves Ronson U.S. said that;

"The sale would reduce its debit, provide additional working capital and enable to to concentrate its funds and resources in its more profitable U.S. division."(97)

But the ink had hardly dried on the U.K. deal when in October 1981 Carwain announced that all manufacturing would cease at Ronson's main plant at Leatherhead and the building and eleven acre site go up for sale. Some work would be transferred to North Shields and the workforce of 120 would eventually double.

The workforce never did double and in July 1982 ten months after Carwain had bought the company the North Shields factory was in the hands of the Receiver for a second time. The union fears about asset stripping had been fully borne out.

With hindsight falling lighter and shaver sales in a static U.K. market was only a symptom of Ronson's problems. It was indicative of the inroads being made into the U.K. market by cheap throwaway lighters and shavers and refillable lighters from European and Japanese manufacturers. And for this state of affairs British

management was to blame. For according to the managing director of a large retail tobacconist chain;

"Traditional makers of lighters, pens and shavers (such as Ronson) have shown no entrepreneurial ability in recent years and adapted too late to product technology and market trends."(98)

Dunlop

The Dunlop Company located its Industrial Hose making facility at Cramlington in 1965. By 1975 the Cramlington operation employed 394 people. Ten years later in August 1985 the number stood at 264. But in order to appreciate the fate of the hosemaking plant and the downward trend in the numbers employed it is necessary to have some understanding of the recent history of Dunlop as a whole.

During the 1960's Dunlop, expecting an increase in demand for car tyres, increased its manufacturing capacity accordingly. Then in 1971 Dunlop set up a trading union with Pirelli. Unfortunately for Dunlop the market did not develop as expected. The widespread introduction of radial tyres to replace the traditional crossply roughly doubled the average life of a tyre. Then the 1973 oil crisis upset all car production forecasts. On top of this Dunlop's major European competitors had also been building up manufacturing facilities. Finally the union with Pirelli became an additional burden as Pirelli itself struggled to cope with declining sales and both companies failed to agree on strategy.

Throughout the 1970's the European tyre industry was marked by a crisis of overcapacity. It was a buyers' market with car and truck makers taking advantage of overcapacity to bid tyre prices down. This

in turn intensified producers' problems by pressing on profit margins. Yet while overcapacity characterised the industry, Dunlop's U.K. tyre operation also suffered from the fact that the tyre manufacturers including Dunlop were increasingly supplying the U.K. market from their own plants in the E.E.C. As Labour Research pointed out;

"The fact that gives greatest need for concern is that of the £48 million worth of motor car tyres imported from the E.E.C. last year half came from sources owned by the seven manufacturers operating in the U.K. If the U.K. manufacturers continue to seek to raise their productivity in Britain while at the same time supplying an increasing proportion of a static market from their own plants outside the U.K., the result will be even greater reductions in the U.K. labour force."(99)

As a consequence Dunlop carried out a major cutback in its U.K. tyre operations. In the period from January 1979 to January 1982 Dunlop closed two of its four U.K. tyre plants at Speke in Liverpool and Inchinnan in Glasgow, halved its workforce at Fort Dunlop in Birmingham and marginally increased the workforce at Washington, Co. Durham. Then in 1983 it closed a third tyre factory at Cork in the Irish Republic. In the five years up to 1983 Dunlop reduced the workforce in its U.K. tyre division from 11,3000 to 3,500.

At the same time Dunlop sold some of its overseas assets, legacies of its colonial past, using the cash to lessen the debt burden incurred largely from losses in its European tyre business. But despite these cost cutting and asset realisation measures 1983 saw Dunlop reporting losses of £26 million from its European tyre operations. During 1982 its debts rose by £55 million to £418

million. This meant that the group's operating profit of £49 million was eaten up by interest charges on its debt. In fact the plight of the company was reflected in its share price which at £2.35p a share in the late 60's touched 39p in 1982.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

It was at this point in September 1983 that Dunlop decided to sell its West German and British tyre interests to a Japanese company, Sumitomo Rubber. But now another problem appeared on the horizon. For as the Financial Times noted;

"Having rid itself of its European tyre albatross City analysts now believe that Dunlop could quickly become an attractive target for a takeover bid."⁽¹⁰¹⁾

That was in September 1983, by January 1985 Sir Michael Edwards, the new Dunlop chairman, had negotiated a complex refinancing package in an attempt to reduce the company's debt. Under the arrangement a consortium of fifty-three banks would convert some of their loan debt to equity shareholding while other institutional investors would also become shareholders. With the rescue package agreed and a shareholders' meeting arranged to rubber stamp the proposals the multi-national conglomerate B.T.R. moved in and bought 28% of Dunlop's preference shares. In the words of the Financial Times B.T.R. now had a "hammerlock on Dunlop's future".⁽¹⁰²⁾ Either Dunlop's directors, shareholders and bankers accepted B.T.R.'s takeover bid, or, as a shareholder controlling 5% of the votes, B.T.R. could block the refinancing package and cause financial disaster. Finally, after seven weeks of manoeuvring B.T.R. succeeded with its takeover bid of £101 million.

From the moment B.T.R. gained an interest in Dunlop the trade unions and the Northern group of Labour M.P.'s expressed concern about jobs. Don Dixon, the M.P. for Jarrow, saying that;

"We are very worried that jobs in the North may be put in jeopardy by a company decision taken outside the region.(103)

It was not only a case of jobs at the Cramlington plant being in question. Dunlop had other facilities at North Shields, at Team Valley Gateshead, at Walker in Newcastle and at West Chirton and Sunderland.

With fears of job loss uppermost the Northern Labour M.P.'s pressed Norman Tebbit, then Trade and Industry Secretary, to launch a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into the B.T.R. takeover. That request was turned down.

As developments in the tyre division illustrate Dunlop itself was not averse to job cutting. But it was not only in the tyre division that jobs were being lost. Following a restructuring plan for the Industrial and Hydraulic Hose division announced in 1981 the Walker works was shut in 1985, with a loss of forty jobs, the remaining sixty workers being transferred to the Cramlington plant. At the same time another thirty-three jobs went, nineteen at Team Valley and fourteen at Cramlington.(104)

Yet while Dunlop rationalised its various divisions the trade unions' fear of B.T.R. turned out to be well founded. Following the B.T.R. takeover another sixty-five workers were made redundant at the Team Valley works in July 1985. Then, having promised the unions that

they would honour agreements made during the Dunlop era, B.T.R. gave three months notice of their intention to pay only the legal minimum redundancy payments. This represented a considerable loss of money compared with the Dunlop redundancy scheme. Two months later in August 1985 the company announced a cut of one hundred and eighteen jobs at the Cramlington plant, reducing the workforce from 382 to 264. Included in the redundancies were 73 shopfloor workers, 38 clerical staff and seven engineers. The sugar on the pill being that they would receive the original "Dunlop" redundancy benefits if they left immediately. Clearly the shift to minimum redundancy payments was, apart from money savings, an exercise in arm twisting designed to encourage the workforce to leave quickly and quietly.

Commenting on the redundancies the managing director of the Industrial Hose division explained that;

"The company's industrial hoses had been sold at a loss in some markets. Therefore it had been decided to cease selling products at such low prices. The aim is to sell products at a profit even if this means losing market share. We will therefore concentrate in the future in selling in one or two markets. From now on the company will concentrate on Europe and strongly reduce its presence in the U.S.A. where it had not been very profitable.(105)

All this of course was very much in line with the B.T.R. philosophy and practice. A philosophy summed up in the company slogan "growth is the goal, profit is the measure, security is the result".

In practice each B.T.R. subsidiary and within that each division is allocated an annual profit target measured as a ratio of return on sales rather than return on net assets. Then each division files monthly reports to the B.T.R. head office in London and these are tracked against the profit plan for the year. Within B.T.R. responsibility is devolved downwards to divisional managers to meet their annual profit targets. Targets which are set deliberately high in order to stretch the company divisions.(106)

Clearly then it is a case of security for some. Security so long as you meet profit targets. Moreover, with this system in place there could be no talk of cross subsidies, no possibility of profitable divisions diverting resources into less profitable or less making divisions. Each element had to stand on its own two feet.

With hindsight there was nothing inevitable about the B.T.R. takeover. In fact the takeover can be seen as an unintended consequence of the Dunlop decision to sell the tyre division and its success in negotiating a refinancing package. But with the takeover labour faced an employer more ruthless than Dunlop. In the words of a G.M.B.A.T.U. national officer;

"Industrial relations-wise B.T.R. is still in the dark ages."(107)

Yet the Economic Development Committee of Labour controlled Newcastle City Council was more than willing to do business with this specimen of macho capitalism. In July 1986, after several years of negotiation, the committee's chairman, David Slesenger, was reported as having clinched a deal with Dunlop Oil and Marine to site a new £10

million plant making offshore oil pipelines at the old Walker Naval Yard now transformed into an Offshore Technology Park. A deal won in competition with other areas notably Dundee.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

While Newcastle's Labour Council was willing to co-operate with B.T.R. so apparently was the A.U.E.W. since it signed a single union agreement covering the new facility. Under the terms of the agreement the company recognised only the A.E.U. while the A.E.U. agreed to flexible working and agreed to accept A.C.A.'s arbitration and decisions in any dispute.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

Given a background of co-operative Labour councils, compliant unions, a central government willing to "take on" labour and, according to B.T.R. "productivity and wage rates which now compare better internationally"⁽¹¹⁰⁾ B.T.R. could now talk about;

"bringing back to the U.K. some production which it had moved overseas."⁽¹¹¹⁾

The message to its remaining Cramlington workers, to trade union officials and Labour councillors was clear. Maintain compliance and a favourable environment for profit making and we will consider recapitalising your locality.

Burroughs Electronics

In 1973 with much pomp and ceremony and with Viscount Ridley in attendance, Burroughs opened its new factory making printed circuit boards on a 26 acre site at Cramlington New Town. Two years earlier the company had inspected sites in Scotland, South Wales, Northern Ireland and at Belmont in Co. Durham before finally deciding to locate at Cramlington. This decision surprising Co. Durham councillors and

officials who, after two months of negotiation, thought they would be welcoming Burroughs to Co. Durham.(112)

At the opening of the plant Mr. Eddie Milne, M.P. for Blyth, announced that;

"Burroughs' arrival in Cramlington represented another landmark in Northumberland's battle against industrial recession and its fight for full employment."(113)

Other officials hoped that Burroughs would draw in more high technology firms to the New Town. Indeed Burroughs with its promise to employ a workforce equally split between men and women of whom 15% would be graduates was the kind of company county planners wanted to see established. The women coming from the locality and destined to sit at workstations assembling circuit boards which would then be sent out to other Burroughs plants in the U.K.

Moreover it was not simply the insertion of another production facility into the Town which was significant but also the fact that in 1981 the company introduced new work practices such as quality circles, performance and evaluation programmes and employee suggestion programmes aimed at;

"solving problems, improving products, reducing costs and increasing production."(114)

In other words harnessing human creativity in a way which furthers company goals and encourages employee identity with the firm.

By March 1982, however, Burroughs announced that 170 jobs would go from its Cramlington plant with the remaining 50 jobs being phased out over the following six months. In the words of a Financial Times reporter what had happened was that;

"Burroughs ... tried for many years to turn itself into a small I.B.M., copying the giant in many respects and, while specialising in some market segments, attempting to compete against it across almost the whole market. This clearly did not work and the company shocked Wall Street in July 1981 when it reported a 12% decline in second quarter net income (as result of falling sales). In response Mr. Blumenthal the company's chairman launched a major restructuring programme designed to "improve the company's operating effectiveness, asset management and return to investors."(115)

The practical effect of restructuring being to discontinue some product lines, concentrate on other areas, develop new lines and cut duplication by U.S. and U.K. plants. Consequently the Cramlington factory was closed and sourcing of circuit boards for the remaining U.K. plants undertaken by Burroughs' factory at Carlsbad, New Mexico.(116)

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter I noted that Cramlington was intended to accommodate the more affluent sections of the working class. While this statement is true at one level the previous survey evidence allows more particular observations to be made. Thus, the development of the New Town simultaneously restructured the class composition of what was still in 1966 a predominantly mining area by drawing in professional, white collar and skilled workers. But as we have seen even within the New Town the differing occupational groups were not randomly dispersed across tenures so that higher socio-economic groups

concentrated in the private sector while lower socio-economic groups clustered in the local authority estates. The skilled manual workers achieving representation in all tenures. Moreover, this pattern persisted across the 1966 and 1975 surveys suggesting systematic structuration rather than a one off finding.

Cross cutting occupational divisions was a gender division so that women were heavily concentrated in "feminised" and semi-skilled occupations. Both the 1965 and 1976 survey finding substantial "labour pools" of women. The existence of these "pools", I would suggest, being in part a function of patriarchy which fixed women to the household, in part due to a lack of child care and in part owing to the fact that Cramlington was unable over a period of time to provide the volume of shop, office and professional work sought by the women. That was one side of the coin the other being that as a reserve army of a particular type, women's experience was conditioned by the needs of both home and work as witnessed by the large demand for part-time work. But in the old mining areas, compared to the New town, the force of patriarchy was stronger as indicated by the relatively high percentage of women (63%) not interested in work outside the home. Class having a limiting and conditioning effect upon the type of job women from the old and new areas sought. In general the two populations consisting of private sector and public sector residents related to separate labour markets. The majority of private sector owner occupiers working in and commuting to Tyne and Wear while just over 50% of the workforce in the council housing was employed within Cramlington. Likewise while Tyne and Wear was the point of origin for most private sector housing residents the local

authority estates drew the majority of their residents from the Blyth and Seaton Valley areas.

As I noted in the last chapter the development of Cramlington was first and foremost dependent upon the decline of coal and the green light which that gave to the establishment of alternative employment on green field sites on the coalfield. However, the fact that roughly 70% of the New Town's housing was private rather than local authority can be accounted for by a number of factors. First, State encouragement of owner occupation via tax relief and the discouragement of other tenure forms such as private renting. Second, the availability of mortgages, the overall rise in real wages during the late 50's and 60's and the steady year on year increase in dual income families. In addition the builders Leech and Bellway were able to ensure that land was released for house building purposes on which they made considerable development gains.

For the most part, Cramlington functioned as a dormitory estate on the periphery of Tyneside and while attracting first time buyers it was, in 1975, largely a staging post on the path to a better house elsewhere. Therefore although the Town failed to meet many of its original objectives as laid down by the Co-Planners the objectives themselves became redefined and vague making it impossible to measure the Town's success. But insofar as many of the private sector commuters would have wished to live and work in Cramlington then their preference was not being met nor could it be in a relatively free market.

While the local and central State supported the development of owner occupation and local authority housing it was also central in providing grants to industries such as Lonrho and Boots P.L.C.

Equally it was the State which undertook the provision of infrastructure, roads, schools, libraries and community buildings. These State inputs facilitating the capitalist accumulation process.

In contradiction to Crosland's model of a smooth running capitalist economy the various case studies of particular industries indicate the inherently crisis ridden character of capitalism. Crisis arising from competition and acting as a spur to restructuring. Within this environment labour is simultaneously a necessary part of capital and against particular capitals in its struggle to defend or improve wage levels, working conditions and customs and practice. These struggles at times constituting part of crisis. But while labour as a global category is essential for capital particular labourers may not be. In that sense the position of labour is characterised by insecurity as capital expels workers, closes plant or re-organises work practices to escape crisis. Moreover, if labour is necessary for capital then capital is necessary for labour. Without capital no production/work can take place. Labour is then redundant and dependent upon various forms of welfare organised through the State or, in times past, through charities, churches and trade unions. In order to escape unemployment, labour and its representatives often appear as supplicants willing to prostrate themselves in the face of capital. However, the dull compulsion to achieve a "living wage" or improve conditions of work is ever present although whether the compulsion turns to action is a contingent matter. For its part capital can play one locality or region off against another for its presence and, with the globalisation of capital one country/state off against another.

From 1973 to 1984 manufacturing employment on Cramlington's industrial estates declined by 23%. However, over the same time scale, employment in services increased in both absolute and relative terms. Given the differing relations of the two populations of public and private sector residents to the local labour market we could expect this fall in manufacturing employment to impact more upon Cramlington's council house tenants. It is to this and other issues which I will turn in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SOUTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND IN THE 1980's

BACKGROUND

The previous chapter noted that the post war years were characterised by a settlement organised around Keynesianism, corporatism and an extensive state welfare system. By the late 60's and 70's this settlement was breaking down as the Wilson, Heath and Callaghan governments attempted to cope with multiple crises. A key element of the settlement being limited economic and social gains for the working class as a result of class compromise. But equally it was the same settlement which drew capital, the State and the Tory party into a series of arrangements, alliances and compromises resulting in relative class stalemate.

The years 1975 to 1979 marked the beginning of a turning point as Thatcherism strove to establish ascendancy in the Tory Party and forge a right wing bloc capable of breaking the fetters of the post war settlement. Once in office the Thatcher government set about creating a new social base for the Tory party through the development and promulgation of "popular capitalism" as an alternative to the welfare state. This strategy involved a wide spread of initiatives which, to quote Jessop et al, included;

"the private appropriation of public assets through the privatisation programme (and parallel share issues), the sale of council owned housing and the individualisation of collective forms of provisions through the abolition of SERPS, the creation of private pension plans, the opting

out of affluent parents from the local authority controlled education system, the increasing support for private health care and so forth."⁽¹⁾

In a similar vein Forrest and Murie⁽²⁾ have referred to council house sales at discounted prices and the encouragement of home ownership via tax relief on mortgages as "subsidised individualism". Whitfield estimating that;

"Between 1979 and 1991 the average discount rose from 31% to 52% giving purchasers financial discounts worth £15,893 million, or an average of £10,388 per purchase" and that;

"Mortgage tax relief has increased fivefold in the 1980's, costing the Treasury over £40 billion."⁽³⁾

While the decollectivisation of welfare provision formed one strategic thrust the Thatcher project ranged deep and wide as it sought to transform the social, economic and political landscape. Therefore although the absolute sale of public assets formed one element in the project the forced contracting out of services to private firms, compulsory tendering and the sale of public land and buildings constituted yet another element.

As well as the "drive to privatise" the actually existing welfare state has been systematically underfunded and made subject to spending cuts and spending limits. Consequently it has been a decade of crisis management of the public welfare infrastructure, patch and repair and increasing shabbiness so that by the late 80's it was estimated that it required;⁽⁴⁾

- (a) £1.9 billion to deal with a backlog of repairs to N.H.S. buildings.
- (b) £4 billion to repair school buildings.
- (c) £36 billion to repair 2.9 million houses in sub-standard condition in England and Wales.

Likewise on a national scale new council house building for rent has virtually ceased while it is the better council housing which is being bought producing a creeping residualisation of the council house sector. In addition, the average unrebated weekly council house rent increased from £6.20p in 1979 to £23.72p in 1990.⁽⁵⁾ The cumulative effect of spending cuts, economic rents and deteriorating fabric making the public welfare system less attractive and encouraging the individual to go private. The underfunding of the N.H.S. and consequent waiting lists for treatment having the same effect.

Gamble⁽⁶⁾ has characterised Thatcherism as representing a "Free Economy and a Strong State". The strong centralised state being instrumental in carrying through the privatisation project, disciplining and monitoring elements of the surplus population and containing and overcoming the resistance thrown up as the Thatcherite project proceeds. Privatisation, contracting out of services and competitive tendering themselves constituting ways of disorganising labour.

Central to the post war settlement was the commitment to maintain full employment. But for the neo-liberals of the new right the government's responsibility was to;

"prevent the consequences for prices and profits of, in their words, 'overfull' employment."⁽⁷⁾

From this perspective unemployment is necessary for the operation of the market and has the secondary effect of weakening trade unions and deterring labour. Similarly the role of the Thatcherite state was to;

"get the labour movement and the progressive legislation enacted at its behest during the post war boom off the employers' backs."(8)

Indeed restraining and pacifying labour by legislation, fear and coercion was a prerequisite to pushing through privatisation particularly in the mines.

Alongside privatisation has gone a process of deregulation both in the finance sector, stimulating the credit boom of the late 80's, and in relation to the labour market. Thus David Marsland, Deputy Director of the Social Affairs Unit, argues that;

"In the labour market as much as any other sphere, dogmatic egalitarianism reduces opportunities and causes inequities. A free market undistorted by State wage controls could enable the young, blacks and women to price themselves back into employment and afford them the opportunity to compete for better jobs and a better life."(9)

Such a statement acting as a justification for the elimination of the Fair Wages Resolution, the abolition of wages councils, the reduced role of the factory inspectorate and the marginalisation of the trade unions. Therefore from the standpoint of the new right deregulation of the labour market was the equivalent of liberating the poor. But

deregulation was only one aspect of strategy for in the words George Gilder;

"What the poor need most of all in order to succeed is the spur of their poverty."(10)

Incentives are therefore necessary not only in terms of benefit cuts to the poor to force them to work but also tax cuts to the rich, to encourage them to work harder.

Lastly the Thatcher Government sought to promote both multi-national inward investment and the small business sector while turning the M.S.C. into an organisation for the enhancement of labour flexibility.

The overall Thatcherite project was then ideologically articulated around the key themes of individual freedom and choice, family values, law and order and making Britain great again. Moreover this combination of ideology, policy and action can be thought of as a particular accumulation strategy quite distinct from what had gone before. Therefore with the benefit of hindsight Crosland can be seen to have severely underestimated both the capacity of the Tory Party to renew itself and its determination to dismantle the post war settlement.

The new accumulation strategy having contradictory effects while working on existing social and spatial divisions so as to deepen and widen them. Various commentators have therefore talked of a North South divide, a contented majority and an increasingly impoverished minority. The Church of England report "Faith in the City" describing the situation in this way;

"Rich and poor, suburban and inner city, privileged and deprived, have been becoming sharply separated from each other for many years and ... the impoverished minority has become increasingly cut off from the mainstream of our national life ... These trends add up to a pattern warranting the label polarisation in a new, comprehensive and intractable form."(11)

While the North South divide was the primary distinction, particularly in relation to regional unemployment rates, just as significant were divisions between different places within regions. The North containing relatively prosperous centres such as Hexham alongside unemployment blackspots like the Meadowell Estate in North Tyneside. The South having extensive pockets of high unemployment, especially in inner London Boroughs such as Hackney, co-existing with prosperous Milton Keynes.

One of the aims of this chapter then is to establish whether Cramlington New Town contained its quota of new poor and to explain the significance of this development.

The paradox is that at a time of increasing social polarisation and a reinvigorated class politics of the right a number of writers have talked of the working class as undermined, ineffective or disappearing. In order to substantiate this thesis a number of claims are made. Hobsbawn⁽¹²⁾ for example notes the decline of traditional male industry and a shrinking working class alongside the growth of white collar and public sector employment together with the increased participation of women in the labour market. Forms of political consciousness emphasising solidarity have therefore given way to;

"the values of consumer society, individualism and a search for private and personal satisfactions above all else."(13)

In a similar fashion Lukes says that;

"the distinction between manual and non-manual labour is less and less relevant, labour or work itself and the sphere of production, seems to be becoming less central to the identity and consciousness of workers, while consumption, especially with respect to housing and transport, has become more central to their basic interests."(14)

The claim therefore is that the 1970's and 80's witnessed a decline in manufacturing jobs and a substantial reduction in the number of workers in all manual categories. Alongside and associated with this change has gone a falling away of the Labour vote. At the same time the years from 1951 to 1981 saw an expansion on a national scale of professional, white collar, technical and administrative occupations. But whatever the job work was said to be less significant as a source of personal identity and commitment. Moreover, from a neo-Durkheimian perspective, the old moral systems were giving way to egoism and greed as the organisations, social networks and communities sustaining the values of co-operation and solidarity were weakened and disorganised.

While these problematics stressed changes at the base leading to a recomposition of the social division of labour as explanations for the decline of the Labour vote and the retreat of the Labour movement, other commentators focused on the sphere of consumption. Saunders,

writing from a Weberian standpoint, suggesting that since housing is an important source of accumulation then;

"Social and economic divisions arising out of the ownership of key means of consumption such as housing are now coming to represent a new major fault line in British society and privatization of welfare provision is intensifying this cleavage to the point where sectoral alignments in regard to consumption may come to outweigh class alignments in respect of production."(16)

Dunleavy⁽¹⁷⁾ arguing that consumption cleavages between those able to afford private provision and those dependent upon the state for collective provision produces a range of consumption interests. The individual, therefore, occupies a specific consumption location and will tend to align politically with the Party which best supports his/her consumption interests. The effect of consumption on voting being a cumulative matter so that individuals who are home owners, use private forms of education and health provision and are car owners increasingly tend to vote Conservative rather than Labour. These consumption effects occurring independently of social class and explaining both the consolidation of the Conservative vote and class dealignment, i.e. the transfer of a percentage of working class votes to the Tories. Duke and Edgell concluding that;

"Political party alignment is influenced more by overall consumption location than by social class."(18)

For the moment I want to put these arguments to one side, before

returning to them, in order to consider significant change in Cramlington and Blyth Valley.

THE VIEW FROM THE BOARDROOM

In the previous chapter I noted the view of the Lonrho management speaking in 1984 that they had inherited a work force which displayed negative attitudes and standards. The point, however, was that these unacceptable orientations had been checked and reversed. But underlying this change in shop floor behaviour was a politics of anxiety fear and vengeance. The Personnel Manager at Commercial Plastics explaining things in this way;

"For years management has not been allowed to manage. It was a matter of powerful trade unions and interfering Labour Governments. But the climate's changing thanks to the Conservatives. We now have the chance to get back in the driving seat and call the shots. It's like getting your own back I suppose."(19)

Sir Douglas Wass, the former head of the Treasury, saying that in his opinion;

"What has emerged in shopfloor behaviour through fear and anxiety is much greater than I think could be secured through co-operative methods."(20)

And it was precisely fear tactics that were on display at Cascade U.K. Ltd, another American subsidiary company based at the Bassington Industrial Estate Cramlington. In March 1985 the A.U.E.W. imposed an overtime ban in pursuit of a 15% pay claim. The Company's response was to organise a postal ballot asking the workforce to accept a 2%

pay increase. But the day before the ballot was to be held a Company letter sent to each individual worker warned that a vote against the company offer and a refusal to restart overtime would mean the;

"phasing out of the Cramlington factory."(21)

For the Personnel Manager at Commercial Plastics the workforce had to realise that the Company was now an independent "profit centre" of its parent company F.O.R.B.O. of Switzerland. Therefore if Commercial Plastics made a loss it would not be bailed out as it had been in the past when it was part of the Unilever group.

However, it was not only a case of the workers "learning to stand on their own feet and doing without handouts". The time was now favourable for a push on pay and working arrangements. For ideally Commercial Plastics would have liked to see;

"A lowering of the basic rate for the lowest paid workers currently earning £120 per week and an increase in differentials and responsibility payments. Second we want to create a general craft worker combining the skills of electricians and mechanics. Third we will require machinists to set and maintain their own machines without recourse to craft workers. Last we will soon be fitting monitoring equipment to the machines in order to measure performance and this should give us greater control over production and effort. Indeed the installation of new technology has already allowed us to cut 75% of our clerical and accounts staff and will give us the opportunity to change work practices and quality targets in other departments including the factory floor."(22)

The name of the game was increasing productivity at the expense of labour. Indeed the workforce at Commercial Plastics had been cut from a high of 1,300 in the late 70's to 700 by 1987. The Personnel Manager suggesting that the number of employees would never again exceed 800. By itself this reduction in manpower going some way to explaining productivity increase.

The labour force at Commercial Plastics consisting mostly of male workers with a large percentage in their late 40's and early 50's working in a plant which operated around the clock on a three shift system. A fact which went some way to accounting for the absence of female process workers for according to the Personnel Manager;

"they didn't want to work night shifts."(23)

Now while Commercial Plastics, like so many capitals in Cramlington, located there in the early 70's and represented the "first round of investment", the second round of large scale investment came with the establishment of plants for the pharmaceutical companies of Boots, Bristol Myers and Merck Sharp and Dohme. However, at the opening of the Bristol Myers plant the Personnel Director made it clear that this was really a relocation of plant within the national economic space from Langley and Ruislip in the South of England to Cramlington in the North.⁽²⁴⁾ Explaining the move he stressed the need to update buildings and plant and noted the "ludicrous land prices" in the South of England which had discouraged relocating in the South. Furthermore, relocating at Cramlington would give the Company access to;

"a large pool of (mostly female) labour."(25)

needed to work on the six pharmaceutical and fourteen toiletry production lines.

But what was striking was the scale of investment and government assistance at these plants relative to the numbers employed.

The Bristol Myers plant representing a £5 million investment but employing 250 people, thirty of whom had moved with the company from the Thames Valley.⁽²⁶⁾ The new addition to the Boots plant costing £13.7 million but only adding 53 jobs to the existing workforce of eighty.⁽²⁷⁾ Indeed the Boots Company at Cramlington was one of the largest recipients of government aid in the region for the period 1974 to 84 receiving a total of £5.4 million in Regional Development Grant and Regional Selective Assistance.⁽²⁸⁾

This second round of investment representing capital intensive processes employing relatively few people compared with undertakings such as Lonrho Textiles or Commercial Plastics. Yet as we have seen firms such as Commercial Plastics were not only cutting back on labour but also seeking to erode demarcation vertically between skills and horizontally between jobs in order to achieve greater worker flexibility while attempting to decrease the pay of the lowest paid grades. Company representatives explaining how tea breaks had been cut and time-keeping tightened up.⁽²⁹⁾ The example of "Cascade" indicating not only the readiness of capital to threaten and ratchet up the stakes but also to favour overtime rather than taking on additional labour.

Efforts to get more out of labour, or to create greater labour flexibility, or to threaten closure and cut wages rates are of course nothing new. The argument here though is that the Thatcher governments by strengthening the hand of capital, demonising the trade

unions and approving the macho management of Edwards at British Leyland and McGregor at British Coal created a climate which facilitated and legitimated "screwing down the workers".

EMERGING SOCIAL DIVISIONS

At its inception Cramlington New Town was hailed by the County Planners as a place for successful living based on a foundation of home ownership. But as I have also indicated the Town from the outset contained a substantial element of council housing. One of these estates known as Shankhouse consists of 480 houses of traditional form and construction built in the early 70's. A period when owner occupation was becoming dominant both nationally and in Cramlington.

(a) Shankhouse in Relation to all Other Blyth Valley Council Estates.

By utilising data from the 1981 census small area statistics Shankhouse can be located in relation to other Blyth Valley council estates (see Table 35). Enumeration districts AMO2, AMO3 and AMO6 are those which comprise Shankhouse. Some radical differences from other Blyth Valley council estates are immediately apparent. First there are clear demographic differences. For example the proportion of children in Shankhouse is by far the highest and is nearly 50% greater than the next highest score and is more than twice the average value. Over 80% of Shankhouse holds contain children while no other Blyth Valley council estate has a proportion which exceeds 50%. Likewise the fertility rate for Shankhouse (i.e. numbers of children age 0-4 as a percentage of numbers of women age 15-44) is much higher being anything up to four times the next highest level and more than six times the average level.

Table 35 Shankhouse Estate in Relation to all other Blyth Valley Estates

	East Hartford	Newsham	Poets	Avenues	Solingen	Hodgsons Road	North Farm	Seaton Sluice	Seghill	Blyth Street	Holywell	New Hartley	Sunnyside	Nelson Village	East Cramlington	Mayfield Glade	Hall Close	Collingwood	Mayfield Dale	Cowpen Farm	Cowpen Estate	Bebside	Shankhouse Estate		
																							AMO2	AMO3	AMO6
% Children 1,2	20.5	27.7	16.6	16.1	20.8	16.0	17.6	20.2	20.9	19.4	21.6	23.2	19.4	30.2	24.4	24.0	22.0	26.4	17.0	27.2	21.4	19.6	42.7	40.9	46.1
% Pensioners 3	20.7	14.4	25.1	28.2	25.4	29.2	23.5	17.1	15.5	16.4	19.3	16.9	22.7	10.1	16.1	16.3	15.3	10.1	32.6	12.8	18.6	20.0	0.7	2.8	2.5
Fertility rate 4	19.8	28.0	10.0	13.7	12.4	21.7	8.9	16.6	17.8	16.6	18.6	30.2	22.6	25.5	22.5	19.2	15.9	17.6	16.3	23.4	17.4	18.1	100.0	95.7	69.5
% Male U.E. 5	13.4	20.0	18.4	17.3	8.6	23.3	21.6	11.9	15.9	12.3	9.2	12.7	6.0	16.6	16.7	17.1	16.0	10.6	17.8	12.9	20.9	20.4	28.3	23.1	31.9
% Female U.E. 6	9.8	6.6	3.3	7.4	3.3	4.4	9.7	5.8	9.5	7.1	7.6	10.2	7.0	11.2	12.3	10.6	11.6	9.0	8.7	6.7	7.3	7.5	14.6	17.8	18.1
% Adults Economically Active 7	58.8	57.1	53.7	50.7	54.6	49.9	54.9	59.5	55.9	50.1	56.8	61.9	57.4	66.5	61.5	58.3	66.4	70.1	46.6	63.0	56.0	56.2	62.9	61.2	65.0
Total Population 11	600.0	1461	533	3530	354	594	546	2250	628	1443	3090	823	441	1128	727	1794	1149	1185	1348	4060	3074	1628	431	682	597
% Households owner- occupied 13	2.7	13.0	9.4	22.0	73.8	14.0	0.5	65.4	1.9	32.1	36.7	40.2	52.0	12.4	5.8	2.6	11.3	11.0	4.3	13.9	2.1	10.2	0.0	8.8	0.0
% Households L.C. Tenants 14	95.5	84.2	84.7	76.5	18.8	82.2	73.2	31.0	98.1	60.5	59.4	48.9	32.8	44.6	85.4	95.2	80.3	61.0	87.9	73.2	94.0	85.1	100.0	83.9	99.3
% Households other Tenants 15-18	1.8	2.8	5.9	1.5	7.4	3.9	25.3	3.5	0.0	7.3	3.9	11.0	15.1	43.8	8.7	2.2	8.4	8.9	7.9	12.9	3.8	4.6	0.0	7.3	0.7
% Households density per room greater than 1 20,21	2.2	5.1	3.0	2.4	1.3	3.1	3.5	2.1	2.3	2.9	1.7	1.2	2.3	7.4	5.0	3.0	32.9	2.6	5.0	3.8	5.8	4.1	3.3	6.2	5.3
% Households Single person 22	17.5	15.5	16.4	26.0	31.1	31.4	21.8	21.0	8.9	24.1	20.6	22.6	20.7	14.3	17.2	19.4	23.5	19.2	30.8	16.8	27.0	21.3	2.5	5.7	2.6
% Households 6 or more people 23	2.7	8.4	3.0	1.6	2.0	1.9	6.6	2.4	3.7	2.7	1.2	4.2	0.6	7.2	8.0	2.4	2.9	2.6	2.6	3.9	4.7	3.9	3.4	6.2	8.5
% Households no car 24	62.5	59.7	62.2	59.7	44.4	75.2	67.7	36.2	56.3	55.4	46.2	44.0	41.6	50.0	44.2	55.9	52.1	37.1	69.1	53.2	67.5	65.7	56.8	52.6	50.3
% Households 5 or more rooms 26	20.5	70.0	56.4	50.5	46.4	33.6	71.4	63.9	59.4	41.7	51.7	65.4	59.8	57.0	64.2	62.2	52.5	57.0	28.1	63.6	50.0	52.0	87.5	29.4	94.1
% Households only pensioners present 27	25.0	20.7	25.7	34.7	37.8	35.5	26.0	24.4	16.0	34.1	27.4	25.6	28.7	15.6	19.2	20.7	25.0	15.3	41.4	19.2	27.2	23.7	1.7	3.1	5.9
% Households with children 28	33.9	45.4	23.8	22.3	29.1	22.0	26.0	33.5	33.5	25.2	33.1	37.2	31.0	49.7	36.3	35.8	35.3	37.3	21.1	44.1	29.6	27.9	81.9	74.2	85.6
Total Households 29	224	463	202	1461	151	259	196	827	212	592	1177	309	174	356	240	623	416	426	584	1363	1144	617	120	194	153
% Households headed by single parent 30	2.2	6.6	6.4	3.3	2.7	3.9	2.5	4.9	5.1	3.0	3.3	4.5	4.1	8.8	5.0	6.1	6.0	5.9	3.1	5.1	6.2	6.5	12.6	13.0	16.6
% Adults Migrant In Last Year 31	5.4	9.9	4.5	5.4	7.9	10.0	4.7	6.1	5.0	5.8	5.9	6.7	7.9	8.8	7.1	9.5	12.5	8.9	5.2	7.0	6.4	9.5	15.5	11.4	14.0
% Total Married Women Working Full-Time 44	27.0	14.7	10.3	15.1	24.7	20.0	11.3	22.1	12.9	17.8	17.9	21.0	25.2	24.2	21.2	18.5	27.2	28.2	12.2	20.0	19.6	21.7	7.8	11.3	14.0
% Total Married Women Working Part-Time 45	22.0	17.4	27.4	21.9	23.7	16.4	22.6	23.0	18.2	19.7	23.1	21.0	25.5	24.2	24.2	27.7	25.4	25.6	19.1	23.3	20.5	18.6	11.5	13.1	17.8
% Total Household Spaces purpose built flats 46	0.0	5.0	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	11.5	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	11.2	5.0	0.0	15.3	5.7	6.2	8.2	9.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
% Households containing children headed by single parent 47	6.1	14.3	24.1	13.3	8.0	17.0	8.9	12.8	13.9	10.9	9.2	11.9	11.5	17.1	12.4	15.8	15.5	14.0	14.3	10.9	19.4	21.5	15.2	16.7	18.7

The proportion of pensioners on the estate is very low at less than a third of the next lowest and less than an eighth of the average level.

If we consider economic activity again Shankhouse stands out. No other area has an unemployment rate for men and women which is as high as the Shankhouse rates and this difference is particularly marked for women.

Clearly, if a Shankhouse household is fortunate enough to contain a full-time bread winner they are likely to be male with the woman tied to the house by domestic and childcare responsibilities. The low economic activity rates for women indicating a low number of dual income households. A significant finding given the importance of two household earners in moving many working class families above the poverty line.

While Shankhouse contained many households with children it also scored high on households containing children headed by a single parent with approximately 17% or 79 households falling into this category. If movement on to the estate is considered by looking at adults migrant in the last year then 14% of all adults had come to live in Shankhouse within this period. This was the highest movement figure for any Blyth Valley council estate in 1981.

This comparison of council estates suggesting that Shankhouse displayed higher rates of unemployment for both men and women than any other estate, a smaller percentage of married women working than most other estates, a greater percentage of households with dependent children and a significant number of single parent families.

(b) Shankhouse Estate in relation to all other areas in Blyth Valley.

A cluster analysis was used to group characteristics so as to compare Shankhouse with all other areas in Blyth Valley and not just council estates. Table 36 gives the result of this analysis for all ordinary enumeration districts in Blyth Valley.

Cluster 1 contains most of Blyth Valley's council estates. This cluster had relatively high rates of unemployment, a low proportion of households with children and very high proportions of pensioners.

Cluster 2 although mostly owner occupied housing contained some local authority housing and was a sort of midway between cluster 1 and 3 with a male unemployment rate of 10% and a female unemployment rate of 5%. Again this cluster had a significant proportion of households containing pensioners but relatively low proportions of children compared with clusters 3 and 4.

Cluster 3 was predominantly the owner occupied cluster and showed low levels of unemployment, low proportions of pensioners, high car ownership, very high economic activity rates for women in general and married women in particular and a high proportion of households containing children.

Cluster 4 contained the Shankhouse enumeration districts together with some other Blyth Valley enumeration districts and some North Housing Association stock in Cramlington. This cluster had very high unemployment rates and low female activity rates but its demographic profile was much the same as Cluster 3 with even higher fertility rates and proportions of children and households containing children.

(c) Shankhouse Estate in relation to other Cramlington Localities.

Table 37 gives scores on the same set of 1981 census indices for localities within Cramlington (see localities map). East Cramlington includes good quality council housing built by Seaton Valley U.D.C. in the 1950's and Mayfield Dale and Mayfield Glade which are more recent Seaton Valley new town council estates. Parkside consists of housing built by the private developers Leech and Bellway since the mid 70's. Beacon Hill is a mix of housing association and owner occupied stock with housing association property dominant.

East Cramlington shows the signs of an older population with a higher percentage of pensioners than any other locality, a lower fertility rate and the lowest percentage of households with children. When these localities are compared in terms of the percentage of married women working full and part time, the Parkside figure stands at 37% and 19% while the Shankhouse figure was 11% and 14%. But it is the unemployment rates for both sexes which really signify the difference between the localities with Shankhouse having a male and female unemployment figure of 28% and 17% while the equivalent Parkside figures were 3% and 6% respectively.

Apart from housing the only other consumption item compared across localities was car ownership and here again the figures are striking with 53% of Shankhouse households and 56% of East Cramlington households not owning a car, compared to only 9% of Parkside households. Although the 56% figure for East Cramlington may be in part a function of the large number of pensioner households in this area.

The other notable feature revealed in this comparison of localities is the selective clustering of households with children headed by single parents in the non-owner occupied tenures. Moreover,

Table 36 Shankhouse in relation to all other areas in Blyth Valley.

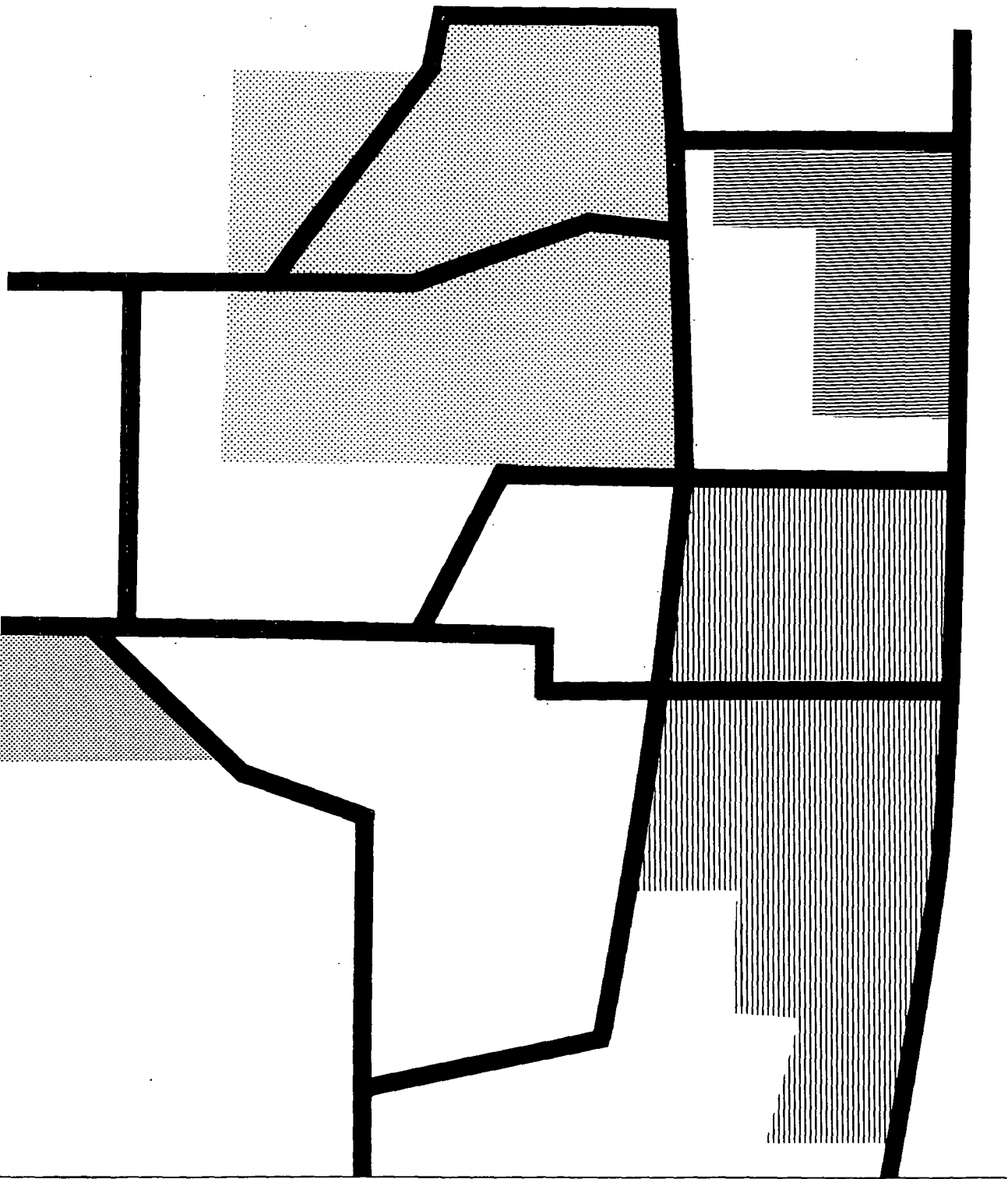
Total Enumeration Districts	(64)	(54)	(45)	(11)
	CL.1	CL.2	CL.3	CL.4
% Children 1,2	18	24	30	36
% Pensioners 3	25	17	3	6
Fertility rate 4	19	21	39	54
% Male Unemployed 5	18	10	5	21
% Female Unemployed 6	8	5	5	12
% Adults Economically Active 7	53	62	76	65
Total Population 11	325	415	530	601
% Households owner-occupied 13	19	56	96	4
% Households L.C. Tenants 14	69	27	1	69
% Households other Tenants 15-18	12	17	3	28
% Households density per room greater than 1 20,21	3	3	1	4
% Households Single Person 22	28	21	9	10
% Households 6 or more people 23	3	3	1	4
% Households no car 24	65	42	13	54
% Households 5 or more rooms 26	44	61	69	73
% Households only pensioners present 27	32	24	5	11
% Households with children 28	26	35	63	65
Total Households 29	151	154	178	182
% Households headed by single parent 30	5	3	3	11
% Adult Migrant in last year 31	9	8	15	14
% Total Married Women working full-time 44	17	25	35	18
% Total Married Women working part-time 45	20	23	22	21
% Total Household spaces purpose built flats 46	10	7	3	0
% Households containing children headed by single parent 47	17	9	5	17

Table 37

Cramlington Localities

	Beacon Hill	Shankhouse	Parkside	East Cramlington
% Children 1,2	33	43	33	23
% Pensioners 3	6	2	2	19
Fertility rate 4	38	88	54	20
% Male Unemployed 5	13	28	3	16
% Female Unemployed 6	9	17	6	10
% Adults Economically Active 7	72	63	79	57
Total Population 11	3173	1710	5397	3922
% Households owner-occupied 13	32	4	94	12
% Households L.C. Tenants 14	5	93	-	4
% Households other Tenants 15-18	64	3	1	84
% Households density per room greater than 1 20,21	3	5	1	4
% Households Single Person 22	13	4	6	21
% Households 6 or more people 23	4	6	1	3
% Households no car 24	35	53	9	56
% Households 5 or more rooms 26	60	86	77	53
% Households only pensioners present 27	8	4	2	25
% Households with children 28	53	80	56	33
Total Households 29	1071	467	1818	1442
% Households headed by single parent 30	8	14	2	4.8
% Adult Migrant in last year 31	17	14	15	7.4
% Total Married Women working full-time 44	33	11	37	17
% Total Married Women working part-time 45	19	14	19	25
% Total Household spaces purpose built flats 46	1	0	1	4
% Households containing children children headed by single parent 47	15	17	4	13
% Working ex. dist. of Residence 51	32	11	73	38

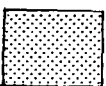
CRAMLINGTON LOCALITY MAP



SHANKHOUSE



EAST CRAMLINGTON



PARKSIDE



BEACONHILL

it is apparent that those economically active and living in council housing are more locally committed in relation to employment than those in the owner occupied sector. This difference is apparent when the figures for working away from the district of residence for Shankhouse and Parkside are compared. No less than 73% of economically active owner occupiers in Parkside work outside Blyth Valley compared to only 11% of the economically active in Shankhouse.

According to the 1981 census 49% of the economically active heads of households in East Cramlington were social class III manual (Registrar General's Classification) with 41% in social classes IV and V. In Shankhouse 57% of economically active heads of household were in social class III manual and 28% in social classes IV and V. But within Parkside 36% of economically active heads of household were in social class III manual and only 10% in social classes IV and V. This distribution confirming the earlier surveys and indicating that social classes IV and V were overwhelmingly located within the council house sector.

(d) Conclusions from the 1981 Census and Derived Cluster Analysis.

Attempting to set Shankhouse in a comparative context begins to illuminate features, raise questions and, when taken in conjunction with the evidence from the previous chapter, suggest processes at work.

When Shankhouse is compared with all other Blyth Valley housing estates it ranks as the most deprived estate as indicated by its unemployment rates for men and women.

Comparing Shankhouse with all Blyth Valley Enumeration Districts again reveals Shankhouse, along with a number of other council estates, to be a deprived locality.

If Shankhouse is set beside other Cramlington localities again it shows up as the locality with the highest rates of unemployment. Moreover, by comparing unemployment rates in the 1975 survey and the 1981 census then although the rates have increased in both the owner occupied and local authority housing sectors, they have increased from different base points. The result was that the Parkside unemployment rates in 1981 at 6% for men and 3% for women stood at a level equivalent to those that had occurred on the local authority estates six years earlier. Meanwhile, in this six year period from 1975 unemployment levels on the local authority estates had increased disproportionately to produce a widening gulf between the localities of Parkside, East Cramlington and Shankhouse. If we demographically compare Shankhouse and Parkside, then although both localities have a similar profile the percentages of married women working full-time are very different at 11% and 37% respectively. Now because of the nature of the data we cannot be sure of the extent to which these married women are also mothers of young children. However, assuming that there is considerable overlap between working and motherhood, then the differences in employment rates for these two sets of women cannot be explained by the fact of childbirth alone.

On the one hand these 1981 census derived figures appear to indicate a situation of emerging and deepening social division between tenures. On the other they require an explanation as to determination.

I would say that the primary determination for the difference in unemployment rates between localities has to do with the fact that each locality stands in a different relationship to the employment

system. Second, the difference between economic activity and unemployment rates for the local authority estates of East Cramlington and Shankhouse may have a time component to it. The East Cramlington population representing an older generation of workers who entered the labour market at a time of a demand for labour and retained a place within it. Third, the difference between unemployment and economic activity rates for women in Shankhouse and Parkside although primarily determined by the women's relationship to separate employment systems may be associated with other variables. These variables may include earlier pregnancy, larger families, the availability of and capacity to afford childcare and the ease with which one group may leave and re-enter the labour market.

Finally, the observed socio-economic differences largely overlap and vary with tenure. The most deprived population located in council housing and the relatively well off inhabiting owner occupied accommodation.

(e) The Shankhouse Housing Records Survey

In order to gather more information regarding Shankhouse a housing records and household survey was conducted in 1986.

Of the 447 households for which tenancy records were available, 137 or 31% were in receipt of standard housing benefit, 139 or a further 31% were in receipt of certificated housing benefit and 171 or 38% were not in receipt of housing benefit. Thus a majority of nearly two thirds of households were in receipt of housing benefit. Table 38 shows the household composition of tenants in receipt of housing benefit.

Table 38 Composition of Housing Benefit Households

	Number	Percentage
Single Person	43	15.6%
Couple Only	28	10.1%
Couple and Dependent Child	137	49.6%
Single Parent plus child	17	6.2%
Couple plus Dep. plus Non Dep.	22	8.0%
Single plus Dep. plus Non Dep.	3	1.1%
Couple plus Non. Deps.	12	4.3%
Single plus Non Deps.	6	2.2%
Multiple Adults	7	2.5%
Other	1	0.2%

The main feature to note about these figures is the fact that 65% of housing benefit dependent households contain dependent children.

The amount of households with rent arrears stood at 223 at the time of the survey. This meant that approximately half of the households on the Shankhouse estate had rent arrears. Table 39 gives details of the amount of arrears. The extent of arrears indicating a generalised inability to make ends meet. There was an apparent relationship between length of residence on the estate and the existence of rent arrears with a majority of those in residence for more than two years having arrears. In part this accumulation in one place of families with arrears was a function of a council policy which prohibited housing transfer to other localities while rent arrears were outstanding.

Table 39 Classified Arrears

	Number	Percentage
No Arrears	224	50.1%
Less than £10	7	1.6%
£10 to £20	18	4.0%
£21 to £50	55	12.5%
£51 to £100	58	13.0%
More than £100	84	18.8%

As well as individual tenancy records an examination was made of allocation records since the first lettings on the estate in 1976. Table 40 compares the profile of the 59 households granted tenancies in 1976 with the 72 households given tenancies in 1985. The figures show that the most recent tenants tend to be young; unemployed; single parents and new householders. These trends deepening the extent of social deprivation on the estate and increasing social polarisation between Shankhouse and other localities.

Table 40 A Comparison of 1976 and 1985 Lettings

	1976	1985
Couples and children	78%	46%
Single Parents	11%	32%
Childless Couples	11%	22%
Previous Householders	78%	54%
One Worker	70%	30%
Two Workers	20%	10%
No Workers/Unemployed	10%	60%
Male under 28	29%	48%
Female under 23	14%	44%

(f) The Shankhouse Household Survey

This survey for the Blyth Valley Housing Department was carried out in July, August and September of 1986. At the time of its

execution there were 427 occupied dwellings in Shankhouse. A response was obtained from 301 households, i.e. 70%.

Dealing first with household structure. Only 13% of the households surveyed did not contain a dependent child. The majority (i.e. 82%) of households containing children were two parent households. Only 9% of households contained more than two adults and the proportion of single person households at 3% and couple only households at 6% was low. The estate was therefore found to be comprised mostly of family households with a relatively high proportion of single parent headed households.

The economic characteristics of the households seemed to suggest a worsening of the estate's position in the years since the 1981 census. For example 55% of the households surveyed contained no full-time earners and 50% contained no earners at all. Just 8% of households had more than one full-time earner and 17% had another earner working part-time.

The economic status of household heads is given in Table 41. From this it is apparent that less than half (i.e. 45%) of household heads were in employment while 36% were unemployed.

Table 41 Economic Status of Household Heads

	Percentage
Temporary sick	1%
Unemployed seeking work	35.9%
Part-time employee	4.3%
Full-time employee	38.5%
Self employed	2%
Retired	3%
Permanently sick	2%
Housewife	13.3%

The household survey found that the occupation structure of the estate was biased downwards with 66.4% of heads of household in the semi and unskilled manual category. Furthermore, when the educational background of the adult population was investigated the absence of educational attainment was striking. Only 4% of adults had stayed on at school after the minimum leaving age. Half lacked educational qualifications of any kind and the only significant qualifications held were C.S.E.'s held by 40% of the adults. Another 14% had 'O' levels, 2% had 'A' levels and just 14% had served a recognized trade apprenticeship.

The income levels of the households were low. National average earnings for men at the time of the survey were approximately £180 per week and household incomes somewhat higher given double earner households. Just 7% of the households surveyed had incomes of this £180 per week level or higher including incomes of resident non dependents. Only 3% attained this level when resident non dependent incomes were excluded.

The most common benefit received by households was child benefit, a non means tested benefit. However, 20% of households in which there was a full-time worker were in receipt of Family Income Supplement, a figure indicating a significant level of low wages. Slightly more than 50% of surveyed households received Supplementary Benefit.

When the age of household heads was considered then 44% were aged less than thirty and approximately 80% under forty years of age. These figures confirming the general picture of a young population. Moreover there were found to be fewer earners in households headed by under 25's (68% had no earner) and over 50's (71% had no earner)

compared with households headed by those between 26 and 50 where 42% had no earner. This same relationship appearing again when benefit dependency was taken into account with proportionately more younger and older households benefit dependent (see Table 42).

Table 42 Benefit Dependency by Age of Head of Household

Age of Head of Household	Percentage
Less than 20	83.3%
20 to 25	59%
26 to 30	57.3%
31 to 35	52%
36 to 40	48%
41 to 50	34.8%
50+	71.5%

The final subject covered in the survey was adults with relations working in the coal industry. Forty percent of adults in Shankhouse had fathers working in coal. Therefore to a large degree the estate was populated by miners' children.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE BLYTH AND CRAMLINGTON EMPLOYMENT OFFICE AREAS

The previous section had identified the Shankhouse estate as a particularly deprived locality. The population of Shankhouse originating mostly within the boundaries of the Blyth Valley Urban District Council. An administrative area coinciding with the Blyth and Cramlington E.O.A.'s.

Within the Blyth E.O.A. the adult unemployment figure followed the upward regional trend and rose from 2,273 to 2,591 between July 1984 to July 1985 (see Table 43) bringing the male unemployment rate to nearly 20% or one in five of the total resident male workforce.

Table 43

Unemployment Statistics Blyth E.O.A.*

	Number Unemployed			Total Vacancies
	Male	Female	Total	
July 1984	1565	708	2273	88
August	1590	704	2294	82
September	1698	758	2456	75
October	1722	710	2432	103
November	1764	678	2442	88
December	1785	666	2451	99
January 1985	1830	673	2503	92
February	1805	666	2471	75
March	1750	666	2416	190
April	1831	671	2502	285
May	1791	691	2482	242
June	1765	677	2442	196
July	1897	694	2591	187
August	1885	659	2544	170
September	1948	701	2649	148

Table 44 Age and Duration of Unemployment Blyth E.O.A.*

	Number Unemployed					
	Under 19	20-29	30-44	45+	Total	
<hr/>						
<u>Males - July 1984</u>						
Up to 6 weeks	50	68	39	41	198	
6 - 26 weeks	63	112	92	132	399	
26 - 52 weeks	70	99	66	66	301	
52+ weeks	42	194	180	251	667	
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	
	225	473	377	490	1565	
						% Total Incr.
						Jul.1984 -
						Jul.1985 for
						Duration
<u>Males - July 1985</u>						
Up to 6 weeks	82	95	80	153	410	+ 107%
6 - 26 weeks	78	132	108	83	401	+ 0.5%
26 - 52 weeks	62	94	77	66	299	- 0.7%
52+ weeks	30	242	218	297	787	+ 18.0%
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	
	252	563	483	599	1897	
% Total incr. July 84						
July 85 For Age	12%	19%	28%	23%	22%	

Table 45 Unemployment Statistics Cramlington E.O.A.*

	Number Unemployed			Total
	Male	Female	Total	Vacancies
July 1984	1262	673	1935	64
August	1244	694	1938	87
September	1323	772	2095	87
October	1271	731	2002	113
November	1245	713	1958	122
December	1275	713	1988	92
January 1985	1333	727	2060	49
February	1279	709	1988	79
March	1256	704	1969	59
April	1286	720	2006	90
May	1288	728	2016	111
June	1259	739	1998	119
July	1332	749	2081	83
August	1341	732	2073	103
September	1640	837	2477	121

Table 46 Age and Duration of Unemployment Cramlington E.O.A.*

	Number Unemployed					
	Under 19	20-29	30-44	45+	Total	
<u>Males - July 1984</u>						
Up to 6 weeks	41	64	58	37	200	
6 - 26 weeks	69	111	91	67	338	
26 - 52 weeks	50	73	69	65	257	
52+ weeks	40	150	149	128	467	
	<u>200</u>	<u>398</u>	<u>367</u>	<u>297</u>	<u>1262</u>	
						% Total Incr.
<u>Males - July 1985</u>						
Up to 6 weeks	71	66	56	51	244	Jul.1984 -
6 - 26 weeks	92	108	89	57	346	Jul.1985 for
26 - 52 weeks	36	81	62	53	232	Duration
52+ weeks	26	153	163	169	510	
	<u>225</u>	<u>408</u>	<u>369</u>	<u>330</u>	<u>1332</u>	
<u>% Total incr. July 84</u>						
July 85 For Age	12.5%	2.9%	0.5%	11%	5.9%	

Table 47

Destination of School Leavers in Blyth Valley*

October 1985	Hillcrest	Ridley	Tynedale	Sub- Total	Astley	Cram.	Sub. Total	Grand Total
Continuing 6th Form Education	-	69	51	120	47	98	145	265 23.8%
Entered F.T. F.E. Courses.	4	25	12	41	30	43	73	114 10.2%
Entered Employment	2	41	44	87	53	52	105	192 17.3%
Unemployed from this Group	-	6	16	22	6	15	21	43 3.9%
Special Measures	10	130	120	260	59	170	229	489 44%
No Inform.	1	4	-	5	2	2	4	9 0.8%
TOTAL	17	275	243	535	197	380	577	1112

* Tables 43, 44, 45, 46, and 47 - Source Blyth Valley Council.

Female unemployment remaining relatively stable over the same twelve month period at 22% of the resident female workforce. Unemployment in the male age group 30 to 44 experiencing the largest percentage increase (see Table 44). Long term male unemployment increasing by 18% with the age group 20 to 29 particularly badly hit (see Table 44).

School leavers in Blyth on special measures schemes in October 1985 constituting approximately 50% of all school leavers reflecting the absence of full time jobs for young people (see Table 47) . This dearth of jobs again indicated by the very low numbers of vacancies at job centres relative to the total unemployed so that in July 1985 there were approximately fourteen unemployed for every vacancy (see Table 43).

Within the Cramlington E.O.A., an area which included Cramlington New Town, Seaton Delaval, Seghill and several villages in the southern part of the district, adult male unemployment was relatively stable between July 1984 and July 1985, representing 11% of the male resident workforce. Female unemployment over the same period rising to 8.5% of the resident female workforce (see Table 45). Male teenagers experiencing the highest level of unemployment increase (12.5%) over the one year period (see Table 46). Short term male unemployment and long term male unemployment over the same twelve months showing the greatest percentage increases of 22% and 9% respectively (see Table 46).

Just as in Blyth a significant proportion of Cramlington school leavers (40%) in October 1985 were destined for special measure schemes (see Table 47). Likewise in July 1985 there were twenty-five

unemployed adults for every job vacancy within the Cramlington E.O.A. (See Table 45).

CHANGE AT THE ECONOMIC BASE IN BLYTH

My earlier comments noted that Shankhouse took the majority of its population from within the Blyth Valley Urban District Council area and that this population was much more locally attached with regard to employment than the Parkside population. The logic of attachment to place meaning that change at the economic base of Cramlington and Blyth heavily impacted upon the Shankhouse population and other locally committed groups.

In the previous chapter I described some aspects of basal change in Cramlington mentioning in particular the decline of manufacturing employment and the rise of service sector employment within the context of overall job loss between the years 1974 to 1984.

In this part I intend to situate Shankhouse and Cramlington with reference to change at the economic base in Blyth.

Information provided by the Coal Board to the Borough Planning Department⁽³⁰⁾ indicated that a total of 4,351 miners lived within the Blyth E.O.A. of which 3,917 were employed in collieries there in 1954. The mining workforce at this time representing 38% of male employment within Blyth and 29% of total employment. The other male bastion being shipbuilding and ship repairing employing 1,143 men or 11% of Blyth's male workers. A third area of significant male employment was transport related engaging 2,161 workers and heavily dependent upon the transport and shipment of coal from Blyth harbour. These three sectors of mining, shipbuilding and repairing and transport constituting 70% of male employment in Blyth and 54% of all employment. Indeed the collective Blyth labourer was predominantly

male, men outnumbering women in Blyth's workforce at a ratio of 3:1, i.e. 10,231 males against 3,239 females with the women concentrated in the service sectors other than transport.

If we move forward thirty years to look at Blyth in 1984 then we find that the coal industry had shrunk to 1,605 men all working at Bates pit (see Table 48). But even at this reduced level coal was still the largest employer in the town and accounted for 28% of the male workforce within the Blyth Employment Office Area.

In 1954 the Blyth Dry Dock and Ship Building Co. Ltd was planning to build a new slipway and dry dock capable of taking 30,000 ton tankers, to add to the five docks already in use.⁽³¹⁾ Thirty years later shipbuilding and ship repairing was a disappearing activity. The numbers of men employed in this field declining from 490 in 1973 to 197 in 1984 (see Table 49), a massive 83% loss over the 1954 figure. The contraction of the railways during the Beeching era together with the decline of coal and shipbuilding having multiplier effects so that by 1984 the transport and communication sector employed 780 workers of which 714 were men. This figure representing 12.6% of the male workforce.

In historical terms Blyth can be seen as resting on the triad of coal, shipbuilding and transport related industries. All these sectors have now declined so that by 1984, for example, the coal industry had contracted from the six pits within the old 1954 town map boundary⁽³²⁾ to just one pit, namely Bates Colliery. A contraction which mirrored the wider decline of the Northumberland coalfield from 67 collieries producing 12.8 million tonnes of coal and employing 40,400 men in 1947 to five collieries employing 7,383 employees in May 1985.

On the other hand the years between 1945 and 1956 witnessed the provision of employment for women in tailoring, rayon weaving and electro-plating factories at Blyth.⁽³³⁾ Nevertheless the Blyth Town Map, prepared in 1955 as part of the Northumberland County Council Development Plan, drew attention to the dependency of the town on a "small range of chiefly male employing heavy industries."⁽³⁴⁾ The Plan going on to predict a shortage of male labour for at least the following ten years as a consequence of the construction of Blyth's power stations. After 1965, however, a large new source of male employment was considered essential to offset the predicted rundown of coal and short term labour fluctuations in shipbuilding.

As I have indicated in the previous chapters the rundown and closure of the region's pits in the 60's created an employment crisis for which Cramlington was presented as the solution. Yet by 1986 Blyth Valley M.B.C. was saying that the manufacturing plant at Cramlington;

"had proved particularly vulnerable during the current recession with the loss of 3,100 manufacturing jobs between 1974 and 1981, representing 37% of total employment."⁽³⁵⁾

A statement which would seem to imply that the solution was in fact part of the problem in that Cramlington was failing to provide jobs on a scale necessary to draw in surplus Blyth labour. Moreover if we turn to consider the employment structure for Blyth between the years 1975 to 1984 then a number of significant features stand out. First is the 37% drop in total manufacturing employment from 3,275 employees in 1973 to 2,073 employees in 1984 (see Table 50). A decline which

particularly impacted upon male labour as employment contracted from 1,837 male manufacturing jobs in 1973 to 974 male manufacturing jobs in 1984 so that by 1984 women just outnumbered men in manufacturing employment. The women mostly located within the clothing and footwear sector. An area which according to Blyth council;

"had suffered instability in recent years with considerable job loss."⁽³⁶⁾

This statement borne out by figures showing a fall in employment in the clothing and footwear industries from 1,423 jobs in 1973 to 722 jobs in 1984 (see Table 51).

By 1984 the coal industry was still the major employer while together the coal, manufacturing and transport and communication sectors still accounted for 57% of male jobs in Blyth (see Tables 48/50/52). Other sectors such as the timber, furniture and upholstery trades shedding 451 jobs between 1973 and 1984 (see Table 53). The only significant areas to see any increase in male full-time employment being public administration, professional and scientific services and the distributive trades with the increases more than offset by male job losses in other sectors (see Tables 54/55/56).

Thirty years on from 1954 women now constituted about half of the workforce in Blyth's factories, shops, offices and pubs with 43% of these women part-time workers (see Table 57). The great majority of women situated in particular fields such as shop work, professional and scientific services, hotels and catering (see Table 58) and the clothing industry. Indeed a continuing historical feature of the employment structure was the tendency for women to be heavily grouped within a narrow range of occupations and at the lower end of these

occupations in terms of wages or salary, status and authority. Moreover, the frequency of part-time work amongst women was indicative of their position as part of a reserve army of labour that could be drawn into and expelled from the workplace in times of expansion or recession or, in the case of public sector employment, cuts in government spending.

THE CLOSURE OF BATES PIT

On the 15th May 1985 the Coal Board announced that it intended to close the last pit in Blyth Valley namely Bates Colliery. It was not only the closure of a pit but the end of a way of life. However, in order to appreciate the wider significance of this event it is necessary to view it as a moment in the process of change which began with the Heath government of 1970 to 1974.

In September 1971 the miners put in a 47% pay claim. Over the years of Lord Roben's chairmanship of the N.C.B. they had seen pits close while they slipped down the national earnings league. The N.C.B. offer of a 10% pay increase was rejected and the miners voted for strike action. With the bulk of public opinion behind them the N.U.M. brought out all of its 280,000 members. The union deciding to accelerate the run down of coal stocks by using flying pickets to prevent coal supplies getting to the power stations.

With only seven weeks supply of national coalstocks remaining, the miners assembled 15,000 pickets at the Saltley Coke depot in the West Midlands and succeeded in closing the facility. A temporary closure giving a symbolic victory and providing a psychological blow which threw the government off balance. Douglas Hurd saying in his diary that;

Table 48 Employment in Coal Mining at Blyth 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	1,925	0	11	6	1,942
74	1,915	0	11	7	1,933
75	1,908	1	12	7	1,928
76	1,911	0	15	8	1,934
77	1,954	0	14	9	1,977
78	1,887	0	14	10	1,911
81	1,894	1	15	7	1,917
84	1,605	3	16	5	1,629

**Table 49 Employment in Shipbuilding
and Ship Repairing At Blyth 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	490	1	11	0	502
74	176	0	10	2	188
75	17	0	2	1	20
76	60	1	3	0	64
77	48	1	3	0	52
78	171	0	5	2	178
81	148	1	3	7	159
84	197	0	4	8	209

Table 50 Employment in Manufacturing in Blyth 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	1,837	5	1,310	117	3,275
74	1,662	11	850	145	2,673
75	1,325	8	800	82	2,217
76	1,412	15	1,140	139	2,699
77	1,341	8	1,524	177	3,057
78	1,372	10	1,242	433	3,062
81	1,095	21	1,072	155	2,335
84	974	16	1,044	43	2,073

Table 51

**Employment in the Clothing and
Footwear Sector at Blyth 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	166	0	795	18	979
74	48	1	293	23	365
75	40	2	326	8	376
76	97	1	795	64	957
77	131	1	1,203	88	1,423
78	130	3	915	333	1,381
81	97	0	573	43	713
84	83	0	632	6	722

Table 52 Employment in Transport and Communication at Blyth 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	823	7	67	10	907
74	807	5	71	11	894
75	869	14	73	10	966
76	802	11	63	12	888
77	777	10	63	15	865
78	781	4	67	18	870
81	758	3	43	19	823
84	714	7	42	17	780

Table 53

**Employment in Timber, Furniture and
Upholstery Sector at Blyth 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	371	4	108	8	491
74	362	1	92	9	464
75	352	1	89	7	449
76	354	2	82	10	448
77	285	3	80	7	375
78	293	1	73	7	374
81	133	2	11	9	155
84	35	0	1	2	38

**Table 54 Employment in Public Administration and Defence
 at Blyth 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	502	5	209	253	969
74	563	11	233	284	1,091
75	394	8	219	54	675
76	408	15	208	43	674
77	5,519	13	1,889	181	7,602
78	5,450	12	1,889	183	7,534
81	3,831	11	1,122	172	5,136
84	4,184	4	1,530	76	5,794

**Table 55 Employment in Professional and Scientific Services
at Blyth 1973/84**

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	205	11	383	286	885
74	188	4	374	319	885
75	231	27	402	286	946
76	199	16	349	292	856
77	259	31	422	348	1,060
78	242	34	433	355	1,064
81	203	29	364	408	1,004
84	230	53	345	422	1,050

Table 56 Employment in the Distributive Trades at Blyth 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	351	40	388	539	1,318
74	286	48	393	471	1,198
75	321	121	399	548	1,389
76	321	165	377	585	1,448
77	309	157	364	599	1,429
78	323	129	357	610	1,419
81	383	105	351	570	1,409
84	436	30	516	720	1,700

Table 57

Total Employment at Blyth 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	7,170	198	2,717	1,663	11,748
74	6,980	200	2,264	1,686	11,130
75	6,243	300	2,752	1,405	10,200
76	6,035	346	2,462	1,619	10,462
77	6,159	336	2,932	1,726	11,153
78	6,222	312	2,623	2,033	11,190
81	5,627	321	2,311	1,814	10,073
84	5,633	236	2,578	1,972	10,419

Table 58 Employment in Hotels and Catering at Blyth 1973/84

Date	Males Full-Time	Males Part-Time	Females Full-Time	Females Part-Time	Total
1973	50	68	67	255	440
74	49	63	60	270	442
75	44	72	64	243	423
76	46	84	58	303	491
77	38	62	61	322	483
78	46	75	34	324	479
81	35	99	24	347	505
84	32	47	25	272	374

"the government is now vainly wandering over the battlefield looking for someone to surrender to and being massacred all the time."(37)

So in order to retreat and defuse the crisis Lord Wilberforce was asked to adjudicate on the pay claim. He reported within the week recommending 20% for the miners phased in over sixteen months. It was, in the words of Robert Carr, a "disaster" for the government and a defeat for its non-statutory incomes policy.(38)

By 1974 Heath had abandoned his informal wages policy and constructed a complex and statutory three phase incomes policy. In October the N.C.B. responded to the N.U.M.'s 40% wage claim by offering a package amounting to 13%. The N.U.M., recognising that the oil price increases following the six day war greatly strengthened the case for coal and their own tactical position, rejected the N.C.B. offer and called an overtime ban. Consequently coal output began to fall and by the beginning of December, in an atmosphere of increasing tension, Heath announced a three day week for industry in order to conserve coal stocks. Moreover, with the defence of phase three of the pay policy paramount the stage was set for a showdown with the miners' union. The Prime Minister taking advantage of the miners' vote for strike action to call a general election on the basis of "who governs". But it was an election the Conservatives went on to lose to Labour by four seats, i.e. 297 against 301.

For the next eleven years a spectre haunted the establishment. It was the spectre of the N.U.M. and remembered defeats. So in order to lay the ghosts of the past the newly elected Conservative

leadership set in motion an analysis of the lessons to be learned from the strikes of 1972 and 1974. Lord Carrington, the Energy Minister in the last year of the Heath government producing a paper which indicated the centrality of coal in the U.K. economy together with the latent and sometimes decisive power of collective labour in key industries particularly in the energy sector. Later, the widely leaked Ridley report prepared in the late 70's, laid bare the thinking and plans of a future Conservative government.⁽³⁹⁾ A highly strategic report it picked up on Carrington's concerns and set down a five point contingency plan to be brought into operation in future battles with the miners. In essence Ridley conceived a divide and rule strategy alongside the use of state power to counter and wear down the enemy. He therefore recommended the enhancement of wages and conditions of electricity workers in order to avoid disruption in this sector and alliance with the miners. At the same time preparations should be made for a challenge from the N.U.M. This meant the building up of coal stocks, the increased use of coal imports, switching to dual coal and oil firing at power stations and the recruitment of non-union lorry drivers to move coal and break picket lines. Last but by no means least, benefits should be cut to striking miners and a large, well prepared and mobile force of police deployed against N.U.M. pickets.

While preparing for power the Conservative opposition was concerned that in the next confrontation with organised labour they would be on the winning side. The Ridley plan can, therefore, be seen as a blue print for victory in a coming struggle. But its success depended upon timing and a sufficient prior weakening of the old post

war consensus. It was a war of position and in 1981 the Thatcher government, at a low point in the opinion polls, retreated in the face of the N.U.M.'s opposition to pit closures. But the intentions of the government were clear since not only did they refuse to subsidise British coal at West European levels they also proposed, in the 1980 Coal Industry Act, to withdraw all operating grants to the Board expecting the industry to break even by 1983/84. As well as this the restructuring of the steel industry together with the availability of cheap coal imports was contracting the demand for home produced coal. More than ever the coal industry was becoming reliant upon a single customer, namely the C.E.G.B. for its product. The government meanwhile, through the medium of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, was putting pressure on the Coal Board to reduce costs and change its management structure. The M.M.C. report finding 70 collieries with operating losses of more than £10 a tonne and describing the closure of high cost pits as the;

"single most effective measure in reducing costs and improving efficiency."(40)

The main strategic concern for the government being that it had little faith in the Coal Board's ability and willingness to restructure the industry. A problem tackled by importing Ian McGregor to chair the Board and allowing him to appoint managers willing to operate the M.M.C. agenda and the Ridley plan. The replacement, in 1982, of Glynn England at the C.E.G.B. by Sir Walter Marshall serving a similar purpose of putting in place an enthusiast of Nuclear Power and a man willing to go along with government thinking.

By 1984, with the victory of the Falklands War behind it and rising popularity in the opinion polls, the government signalled its intention to quicken the pit closure programme by installing Ian McGregor at the Coal Board. It was a move designed to provoke the mining unions. So when the Coal Board announced the closure of Cortonwood pit on uneconomic grounds without going through the area review procedure the Yorkshire area N.U.M. called all its members out on strike and asked for national support. The N.U.M executive sanctioning area strikes but refusing to call a national ballot on the grounds that threatened pits had a moral right to expect national support. Moreover it would be unprincipled for a majority to vote other members out of a job by refusing to support a national strike.

By April 1984 all the coalfield areas except Notts, Leicestershire and South Derbyshire were out on strike but the lack of a national ballot was to remain a handicap draining the strike of legitimacy and shifting the focus away from the issue of pit closures and the need for an alternative energy strategy.

For a year the miners and their supporters sustained the strike but in the end they went down to defeat. At Bates pit about 20% of the workforce had returned to work during January and February 1985. The colliery manager speaking to the returned miners in groups of twenty or thirty and explaining that the pit had a good future with at least ten years of life including two years of development work provided they convinced their colleagues to come back to work as soon as possible.(41)

With the strike threatening to slowly disintegrate the N.U.M. Executive decided on a united return to work on the 5th March 1985 without an agreement with the Board on the criteria to be used for

closing a pit. Although N.A.C.O.D.S. did succeed in introducing an independent element into the Colliery Review procedure.

With victory in its grasp the Coal Board now felt that it had the right to manage regardless of union concerns. Therefore on the 7th May, just four months after the promise that Bates had a rosy future, the Coal Board announced that Bates was making a negative contribution to the area accounts and would become a manpower reservoir. An announcement that was tantamount to closure and proclaimed without reference to the normal Colliery Review procedure. The Board following up its announcement by sending out letters to individual miners giving notice of closure and inviting them to transfer to long life pits or apply for redundancy.

Faced with the prospect of the loss of manpower and defacto closure the Northumberland N.U.M. applied for a writ forcing the Board to stabilise the workforce at 900 pending resort to the Review procedure.

At the beginning of September the Review procedure was invoked but on the 18th October the N.U.M. appeal against closure was refused. The reason given being that;

"the Board does not consider that there is any prospect of the Colliery improving performance and results to the extent necessary to achieve economic viability."⁽⁴²⁾

A decision which was very much in line with the Coal Board's "New Strategy for Coal" published in October 1985. A strategy which abandoned the fixed output targets of previous Plans for Coal and made response to the market the key requirement of the industry. The Board's task was to meet demand at minimum cost therefore output was to be maximised at;

"our low cost collieries and open cast sites as a means of reducing average costs."(43)

For a colliery to have a secure future it must aim to produce coal at below £38 per tonne as opposed to the £47 per tonne at Bates pit. Apart from that the main customer for Bates coal was the C.E.G.B. and its power stations on the Thames. With operating costs at £2.53p a gigajoule Bates coal could not hope to compete with imported coal delivered to the Thameside power stations at £1.50p a gigajoule.

Now that the Coal Board had refused the N.U.M.'s appeal and was intent on closure the union referred its case for keeping Bates open to the Independent Review Panel. The Panel reported on the 4th February 1986 and recommended that although Bates could not expect to ever make a profit it should be allowed to operate for at least two years concentrating on the Threequarter R. seam. If results then showed that the pit could make a contribution to area overheads it should remain in operation thereafter. Especially since closure of the pit would result in the loss of a substantial energy resource, namely the 29 million tons of recoverable reserves of coal.(44)

The Review verdict was greeted as a vindication of the N.U.M.'s case. Bill Ethridge, a miner at the pit, saying;

"this is what we were on strike for for twelve months.

This is what we have been fighting for."(45)

Ronnie Campbell, the N.U.M. Branch Secretary, adding that he believed the pit would "go on for twenty years".(46) Blyth Valley council leader, Ian Gordon, describing the reprieve as;

"The best piece of news I've had in eleven years."(47)

It seemed for a time that the efforts and sacrifices to keep the pit open had not been wasted, that something of a victory had been won. But at the beginning of March, just four weeks after the Review decision, the Coal Board announced that it could not accept the Review Panel recommendation and therefore the Bates closure would go ahead.

As the news was broken to the miners the men at the coalface stopped work in disbelief. Ken Black, a face worker commenting that;

"We had our hopes raised after the Review but now we have been told we are finished next Friday. It doesn't bear thinking about. There will be a few transfers but the Board isn't worth working for."(48)

The sense of betrayal spreading beyond the confines of the N.U.M. with Councillor Gordon summing up the feeling of many when he said;

"I find the action of the Coal Board contemptible and their approach to the Review procedure farcical. I thought we had succeeded because of the power of the Review and the strength of the arguments but obviously it doesn't make any difference.

I don't know how anybody can have any confidence whatsoever in the way this country and its industries are being managed. It reflects on the Government. They are totally dishonest. I spoke to the Energy Under Secretary, David Hunt, yesterday and he just stood there talking about his concern for the community while saying that the Government couldn't interfere with a Coal Board decision."(49)

The Observer newspaper⁽⁵⁰⁾ indicating that the price from N.A.C.O.D.S. for staying out of the miners' strike had been a pledge by the Board to give "full weight" to the views of the Independent Review Panel. Ian McGregor telling the N.A.C.O.D.'s negotiators that it would be;

"difficult for the Board to come up with a decision which ran differently to the Review."⁽⁵¹⁾

The Prime Minister and the Energy Secretary, Peter Walker, assuring N.A.C.O.D.S. that the Review process was "sacrosanct".

Now that the strike was over it was clear that the Coal Board had no intention of allowing its closure plans to be derailed. Moreover, even though its accounting procedures for deciding what constituted a viable pit were highly suspect,⁽⁵²⁾ the Board continued to rely upon them not only to close individual pits such as Bates but also to determine the future of the whole industry.

Faced with the Board's determination the N.U.M. asked for and were refused a judicial review of the Board's closure decision. It was the last move in the game and with its failure the N.U.M. called off its campaign to keep Bates open.

In delivering its judgement on Bates the Board brushed aside the social costs of closure as not their responsibility. Wade⁽⁵³⁾ estimating the cost of the loss of 1,513 mining jobs at £107 million spread over seven years or £63.7 million for the 900 men on the payroll at the time of the review. The costs covering such items as redundancy payments, lost national insurance and income tax contributions, the loss of rate revenue from the N.C.B. and the increased take up of unemployment benefit and rent and rates rebates.

In the same vein this type of cost analysis could be extended to include mining jobs foregone and not therefore available for new labour, the downward multiplier effects on jobs in dependent industries and services and the dampening effect on the local housing market. Equally there may well be additional health costs as the psychological impact of redundancy takes its toll in terms of individual ill health and family well being.

Quantifying the effects of pit closure in cost terms is notoriously difficult but the effects are no less real for want of hard figures. While at street level there was a clear appreciation of what the closure of Bates would mean for the Borough and its people. Michael Davidson, aged 30 and unemployed, putting it this way;

"We have lost the shipyards and now the mines are gone. There just isn't the work and closing Bates will make finding a job even more difficult."(54)

The manager of Dewhirsts butchers shop recognising that the closure of the colliery would be bad for business;

"It will be like the miners' strike all over again with trade falling off or people buying cheaper cuts of meat or settling for mince instead of steak."(55)

Sean Styles, aged 21 and on the dole, explaining that he had until recently worked as an engineering technician for a Wallsend firm. They had done a lot of work for the Coal Board but with pit closures their order book had shrunk and he had been paid off. In his view the closure of Bates would mean that;

"What happened to me will happen to others."(56)

For the local press it was as if the wheel had turned full circle and Blyth was going back to the thirties although this time it was hard to see where new jobs would come from.

LOCAL AND COUNTY ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

Across the County unemployment rates varied from place to place with the Castle Morpeth Ponteland area showing a registered unemployment rate of 5% in 1986, the Blyth Valley rate standing at 15% and the Cramlington rate at 13%. Economic decline was therefore more significant for some local authorities than for others while by 1990 the County Council felt concerned enough to produce a four year strategy for economic development and regeneration.(57)

In presenting its proposals the County Council sought to contextualise its strategy by pointing out that registered unemployment was twice the national average over a large part of the coalfield area with long term and youth unemployment identified as particular problems. For the County as a whole male jobs had fallen by 14% between 1981 and 1987 while female jobs had increased by 12% although half of this growth was in part-time work so that by 1987 part-time employment accounted for 25% of jobs in the County.(58) For those in work male earnings in 1985 were 10% below the national average and 22% below the national average for the South East. Female earnings were 14% below the national average and 28% below the average for the South East.(59)

Despite the establishment of Cramlington New Town there was:

"still not enough jobs in manufacturing and services and the contribution of small business remained below that necessary for a strong and diversified economy."(60)

Moreover, the private sector was;

"not providing investment opportunities in sites and premises and action by public agencies would continue to be required."(76)

However the County had had some success in attracting;

"high tech companies in pharmaceuticals (i.e. Boots Co. at Cramlington), electronics and software (i.e. Tolag Engineering at Cramlington)."(62)

A measure of success which could be built upon and which would enable Northumberland to cloth itself in the promotional image of "a dynamic technological County."(63)

Mindful of the context of relatively high unemployment and low wages the aim of the economic strategy was to;

"reduce unemployment and raise income levels through employment and training opportunities which meet the long term needs of County residents."(64)

But having proclaimed such an objective the strategy designed to achieve it was traditional, limited and in certain respects contradictory. In the words of the chairman of the Planning and Economic Development Committee;

"Tried and tested approaches will be maintained ... and new initiatives only introduced where there is a demonstrable need and where they will not duplicate the work of other agencies."(65)

The main elements of the strategy consisting of the provision of prestige sites and premises, the promotion of Northumberland as a location for industry and as a tourist attraction, contributing finance to bodies such as the South East Northumberland Enterprise Trust and the Northern Development Company and making grants to small business. Many of these elements echoing those pursued by the Borough of Blyth in 1932, 1956 and 1966 (see Blyth publicity extracts).

What was new was the increasing emphasis on small business formation while recognising that such activity was no alternative to the establishment of a major industry. Or as a leading Northumberland Councillor put it;

"Northumberland needs a Nissan car plant."(66)

These two aspects of attracting inward investment and helping small business was then reflected in the setting up of the Northumberland Investment Office to serve as a promotional agency and the Northumberland Business Centre to encourage small business and administer the small business grant scheme. But rather than a "scatter gun" approach the Investment Office would identify sectors with a "proven and future potential for job growth" and encourage them to set up in the County. The strategy prioritising the attraction of further pharmaceutical plants, food processing and clothing factories.(67)

On the supply side the County proposed to carry out a skills audit and set up a data base of company requirements. The purpose being to match skills with those required by capital. For in the economy of the future;

"the workforce will be required to adapt to frequent changes in the nature of their jobs and be able to offer more than one skill."(68)

Therefore having identified a shift to light industry, services and part-time work the County's economic strategy set out to build upon this shift and reinforce it. The emphasis on developing the tourist and heritage industry and the provision of specific training for this sector implying an increase in part-time and seasonal work.

As far as regional assistance was concerned the County Council noted with concern the reduction in Development Area coverage and the fact that the County was not benefiting from either an Urban Development Corporation or an Enterprise Zone. Regrettably these initiatives tended to;

"emphasise conurbations and marginalise the County."(69)

Consequently the County needed to push for European money from the European Regional Development Fund and the Social Fund. Equally it needed to involve other agencies such as British Coal Enterprises in economic development. The major initiative from British Coal Enterprises consisting of the provision of low cost loan money to build high specification factory and business units at "Enterprise Court" Cramlington.

Yet even as the County planned to focus on the E.E.C. it worried that European money would be increasingly directed to the peripheral regions such as Portugal, Ireland and Greece at the expense of Northumberland. As for small business development, the County fretted that the coalfield had little small business tradition and that the rate of small business formation was below the national average.

The only departure from its traditional approach to economic development being contracts with employers receiving Council support to provide permanent employment to trainees after training. But even here there was no way of ensuring compliance given the unpredictability of the market.

With an economic development budget of £490,000 the County's strategy could hope to do little more than paper over the cracks. In essence the strategy amounted to little more than pleading with capital to locate in the County while small business formation was unlikely to be on a scale necessary to replace jobs lost. Rather than training to meet human needs and expand awareness labour was to be moulded to meet the needs of capital.

So much for the County's economic strategy. However the Blyth Borough strategy⁽⁷⁰⁾ was largely a pale reflection of the County's only operating with a smaller budget of £240,000 in 1985/86. A key difference being money spent on a campaign to keep Bates pit open. But if the County and Borough strategies were limited their purpose was more than economic. The absence of jobs was a political issue. An issue which worried constituents and prompted local politicians to be seen to be doing something even if the something was peripheral and remained unevaluated.

FOREWORD

Blyth possesses many attractions which are essential to industrial firms, and which should encourage the establishment of new industries. Amongst these are :

- (a) Cheap sites.
- (b) Low rates.
- (c) Low Harbour Dues.

- (d) A cheap and adequate supply of gas and electricity for lighting and power purposes.

- (e) Abundance of cheap coal mined in the vicinity.

- (f) An ample supply of efficient skilled and unskilled labour.



TOWN CLERK OF BLYTH
(MR. J. LEIGH TURNER)

- (g) Good transport facilities by road, rail and sea.
- (h) A good supply of pure water.
- (i) Efficient Municipal Services.
- (j) First-class educational facilities.
- (k) Ample open spaces for public recreation.
- (l) Conveniently situated residential districts within easy reach of the industrial centre.

It is hoped that this little book will be of service to the business world for which it is intended.

Page nine

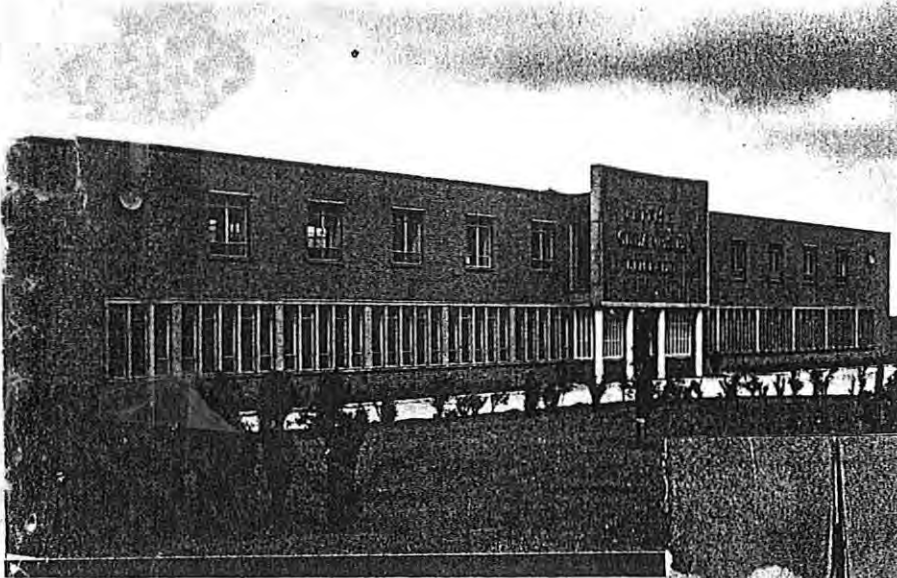
BLYTH BROCHURE 1932.

A town which has the advantages of both the sea and the country can hardly fail to be satisfying to its residents or attractive to its visitors. There is something about the perpetual business of the sea and the never-ending cycle of nature in the country which is ageless and enchanting.

The many advantages that the town is able to offer to manufacturers has attracted several new and light industries to the area—a most important safeguard against any possibility of depression.

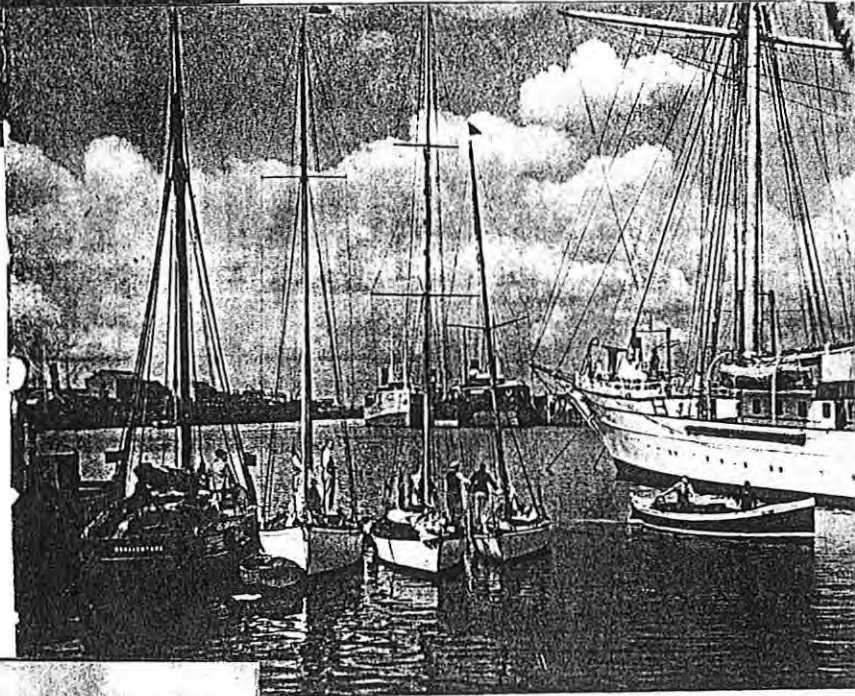
MODERN INDUSTRY IN A MODERN SETTING

British Celanese Ltd.



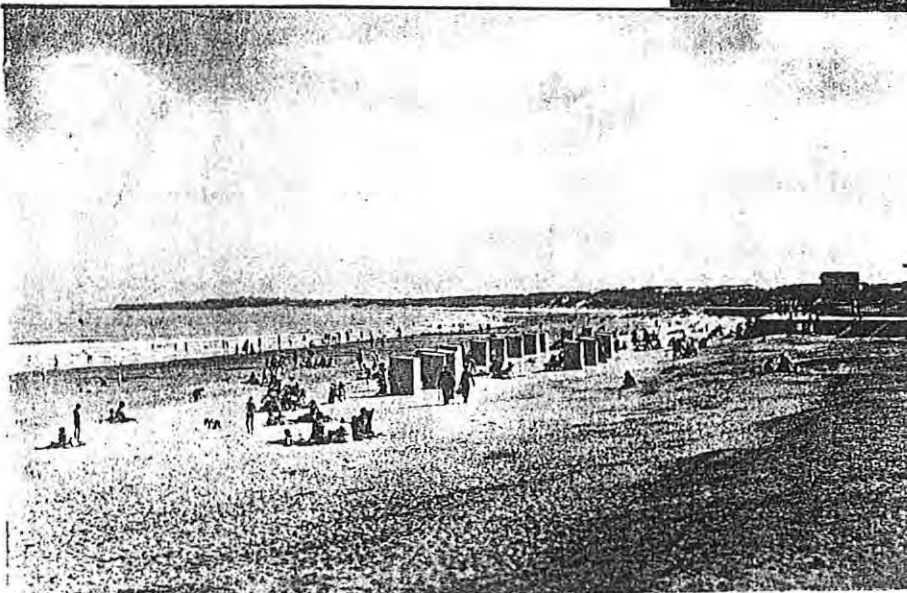
Blyth is such a town with these advantages, and it has more. A tradition of living and working, stretching back over many centuries, has been cherished and refashioned to meet the needs of the present day. All the mighty business of those who go down to the sea in ships is still the main theme amplified and broadened now by new industries which bring fresh insight and security.

And side by side with the work goes relaxation, to be had on river or shore or in rolling countryside. Blyth is a place of activity in whatever field time or taste demand. Wisely provided for in things municipal, public service or private enterprise, it is a community worth knowing. If this book can increase that knowing, it is not without value.



WORK AND PLAY IN SOUTH HARBOUR

BLYTH BROCHURE 1956.



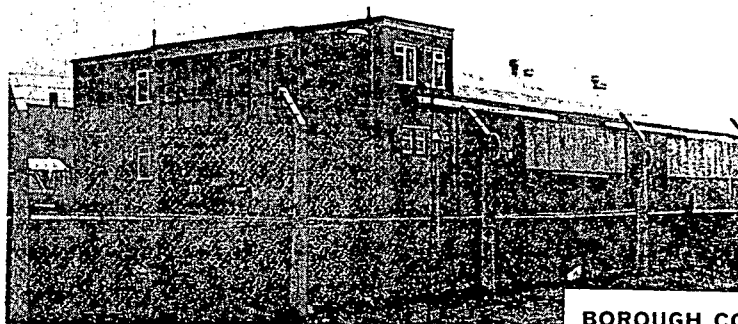
A. Keeling

SEA AND SUN AND SAND

WE OFFER YOU . . .

EVERY FACILITY
for the success of your business
A PLEASANT WAY OF LIFE
with cultural, sporting and recreational opportunities
and
A HEARTY WELCOME

Advance factory built
and let by
Blyth Corporation
on the trading estate



THE QUESTION OF LABOUR

Local labour has long enjoyed an excellent reputation for its dependability and its good record in the industrial relation field. More recently—as new employers will testify—it has become noted for its adaptability.

In recent years light industries, for example tailoring and the manufacture of pharmaceutical products, employing predominantly female labour have been successfully established in the town and attract many workers from the neighbouring areas.

With contraction likely in the coal-mining industry, and upwards of 1,500 young people entering the employment field each year in the immediate neighbourhood, the supply of labour for new enterprises should present no problem. There is in addition a large reserve of female labour which would respond to new employment opportunities.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO LIVE IN BLYTH ?

We are glad you asked that question. We like it, and we think that you would, too.

We like the shopping facilities (and so, too, do many more people living in the surrounding areas), and on Fridays and Saturdays these are augmented by a lively open-air market.

Formal education is catered for by a large grammar school, secondary and primary schools. Informal education is available through the Evening Institute and the Public Library. Within easy reach are technical colleges offering commercial and industrial courses.

We enjoy our sports—football (Croft Park is the home of the famous Blyth Spartans), cricket (Northumberland Cricket League, and some minor combinations), golf, tennis, badminton, bowls, archery, motoring, cycling, rowing, yachting, swimming, fishing. . . .

We like particularly our splendid beach, promenade, chalets and children's playground. And we feel that our easy access to a very wide choice of uncrowded countryside must be the envy of most other places.

BOROUGH COUNCIL ASSISTANCE—

The Borough Council has a well laid out industrial trading estate—Kitty Brewster Trading Estate—on which factories are available at short notice for sale or rent. Prices are competitive and, in addition to the Government grants for purchase of factories, the Council will be prepared to advance a mortgage loan to the developer.

HOUSING FOR KEY WORKERS—

A firm providing new employment can rely on a ready response from the Borough Council to meet the needs of key worker houses and many are already provided.

BLYTH BROCHURE 1966.

CLASS AND CLASS STRUCTURE

Throughout the previous chapter material was presented which indicated that the establishment of Cramlington New Town helped change the social structure of South East Northumberland. As building proceeded more and more white collar, service sector workers and skilled workers were drawn into the coalfield and into owner occupation. In parallel with the development of the Town employment within the coal industry fell and from the mid 60's onwards Cramlington and Blyth competed for inward investment. A persistent theme in attracting employers being the availability of a pool of cheap female labour.

At Blyth and Cramlington manufacturing plants located on purpose built industrial estates. However, between 1973 and 1984 employment in manufacturing declined at both locations. Across the County as a whole there was a steady consolidation of service sector employment so that by 1987 60% of total employees worked in services.⁽⁷¹⁾ But this shift from mining to a relatively small manufacturing base and an expanded service sector should not be interpreted as a decline of the working class and can only be seen as such if the working class is narrowly defined as manufacturing labour. An alternative is to think of the working class as part of capital and therefore

"its occupational structure, mode of work and distribution through the industries of society are determined by the ongoing process of capital accumulation."⁽⁷²⁾

In other words the working class is taken up, released from and distributed through the branches of economic activity in accord with the movement of capital. Suggesting that this or that sphere of

activity represents the working class is to freeze what is in reality a process. Moreover, the fact that labour can be expelled and brought back into work provides a basis for deriving a definition of the working class which is symptomatic of its condition and historically resonant, namely that it is;

"that class which, possessing nothing but its power to labour, sells that power to capital in return for its subsistence."(73)

I say historically resonant because the development of capitalism as a particular system of production depended upon the creation of just such a class.

At the same time this definition although essential must represent a first approximation in an appreciation of the real since it would include within the working class the company personnel officer as well as the machine operator, the store manager together with the counter assistant. In order to deal with this difficulty Wright adds two further dimensions enabling a fuller comprehension of the working class. The working class is therefore those wage labourers who have nothing to sell but their labour power and;

"do not control the labour of others ... nor control the use of their own labour within the labour process."(74)

With this definition class, rather than appearing as a static status derived concept becomes a relational concept involving subordination and degrees of discretion over the work task, working conditions and control of investment and resources. The secretary in

the typing pool and the office cleaner, the filing clerk and the counter assistant become as much part of the working class as the miner and the production line worker. From this perspective the working class in late capitalism rather than disappearing has in fact expanded as capital brings more and more activities under the sway of the market, deskilling within the labour process proceeds and state functions swell to absorb and administer the surplus.

As far as Cramlington is concerned applying Wright's criteria would mean that many of the workers subsumed under the categories of junior non-manual and service personnel in the 1966, 1968 and 1975 surveys should be included in the working class while foremen, intermediate non-manual, professional and managerial categories would be excluded. Wright going on to suggest that these positions occupy;

"contradictory locations within class relations."⁽⁷⁵⁾

In other words such positions can be seen as objectively torn between the primary classes of bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and proletariat according to where they lie on the dimensions of control over resources, over the labour of others and over their own labour. The degree and extent of control bringing a set of locations 'closer' to one or other of the primary classes but having interests identical to neither. Therefore under Wright's schema the primary school teacher and the university professor are both "semi autonomous employees" with the teacher closer to the working class and the professor to the petty bourgeoisie. The foreman and the middle manager in a company occupying contradictory locations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat with the foreman nearer the working class and the manager nearer the bourgeoisie.

Poulantzas⁽⁷⁶⁾ however will have none of this and by adopting a narrow interpretation of productive labour comes up with a numerically small working class. An interpretation which I would want to reject not only because of its formalism but because it fails to register the working class as that class which has been dispossessed. It is precisely the notion of dispossession which Wright incorporates into his discussion of class.

Another way of acknowledging the relational dynamic of class is by employing Friedman's⁽⁷⁷⁾ concepts of central and peripheral workers. Central workers being those who are considered essential by management or those who by their strength have forced managers to consider them essential. Peripheral workers are expendable labour although whether a particular group will be laid off depends upon the severity of top managers' need to restructure and reduce costs.

In Friedman's formulation while the achievement of centrality may or may not be a form of class struggle the retaining of central status certainly is. Moreover it is a form of class struggle which can be seen as dual closure, i.e. fighting upwards against the boss and downwards against other workers often by the use of exclusionary strategies. Within this context we would expect a surplus of jobs to lessen exclusionary practices.

The point, however, is that in order to maintain flexibility capital requires separate groups of workers who are paid less and who are expendable and a body of central workers. The former operating under a regime of direct control and the latter offered responsible autonomy and relative security. During recession central workers tend to be protected in order to secure long run profit when trade revives while peripheral workers are discharged. Ultimately though no

worker's future is permanently assured and former central workers, i.e. miners, dockers and Fleet Street printers may find their position eroded. Much of the population of Shankhouse consisting of unemployed peripheral workers unable to find a foothold in the Cramlington and Blyth labour markets.

A NEW UNDERCLASS?

Since the 70's the term underclass has been used by T.V. and radio commentators, politicians, journalists and writers to refer to the unemployed. The concept was imported from the U.S.A. by Charles Murray, one of its most ardent advocates. In Murray's⁽⁷⁸⁾ view a growing number of unemployed lack moral restraint and display values different from the rest of society. They embrace of culture of poverty which prevents them achieving success. The values constituting this culture include sexual promiscuity, a rejection of the work ethic, wanting something for nothing and involvement in crime. Welfare payments allegedly tending to increase the size of the underclass by encouraging a "dependency culture". Murray going on to suggest that the values of the underclass are now "contaminating the life of entire neighbourhoods" and are passed on from parent to children creating an ever expanding pool of lumpen poor set apart from those in work.

As polemic Murray's representation of the underclass seems persuasive. But it is seriously flawed as social science. Poverty and unemployment are first and foremost economic and structural phenomena. However, the underclass thesis explains these phenomena in terms of individual character defects which are held to pervade an entire population. At root such explanations amount to little more

than blaming the victim although in Murray's polemic the State is also guilty of creating the underclass by virtue of general universal doles undermining the ethic of self help. The logic of Murray's argument leading to policy measures which attempt to remoralise the poor, provide stringent criteria for the receipt of benefit including enforced 'work' programmes and cut public welfare.

From another angle the underclass thesis serves to divide those in and out of work by presenting those not in work as feckless wasters. It is the academic equivalent of a Sun newspaper editorial with a similar ideological charge. But even as metaphor the term underclass implies a strata separate, beneath and distinct from the working class. Moreover, in focusing on the individual the underclass paradigm detracts from structural and political explanations of poverty and unemployment. The same individualist perspective informing commentaries which explain youth unemployment in terms of the lack of necessary skills and a proper attitude to work. Indeed it is just such an explanation which has shaped the State's 'solution' to the problem of youth in the form of skill and work experience schemes for the young unemployed.

A moment's reflection should, however, make us pause before accepting the underclass thesis or individualist explanations of unemployment and poverty. For a start every generation has seen a pool of unemployed and within that a sub group sometimes identified as the residuum, the feckless or the putrefying masses. These pools of labour disappearing in the boom conditions just prior to World War I and post 1945. If the culture of poverty and underclass theorists are correct and 'don't want to work' values are transmitted across generations, then how are these near full employment situations to be

explained when the theory suggests a more and more rapid and continuous growth of lumpen poor. Likewise it is worth recalling that in the Willis' 1975 study⁽⁷⁹⁾ of working class lads leaving school without qualifications and with "anti-authority" attitudes all the boys wanted to work and found work easily. The same lads leaving school in Cramlington and Blyth in 1985 would have had a much depleted chance of getting work but this first and foremost had nothing to do with attitude defects or the fact that they were unqualified and everything to do with economic restructuring and a lack of supply of jobs.

In contradiction to Murray's work I would argue that mass unemployment is an inherent potentiality of capitalism. The strategies adopted by capital to maintain profitability are the "prime movers" in the growth of unemployment. The least competitive enterprises closing altogether while at other plants labour is shed or new technology reduces the numbers of workers needed.

Having said that not all workers are equally secure and it is peripheral workers who are the first to go 'out of door'. The impact of restructuring additionally acting to rupture the transition from school to work for a section of working class youth. To put it crudely many young working class people have nowhere to go whereas in the past they could have expected a job. Clarke and Willis⁽⁸⁰⁾ suggesting further blocks to youth employment such as the collapse of the apprenticeship system as a consequence of the breaking down of unwanted divisions of labour. Second the availability of women to fill low paid and part-time employment and the preference of many employers for mature workers tied to financial and family responsibilities and therefore more responsive to the discipline of the wage. Finally the costs of redundancy payments preventing

employers 'shaking out' more than their immediate needs and substituting young workers.

Again contrary to Murray, rather than viewing the unemployed and the poor as separate, they should be seen as an integral part of the working class, its most disadvantaged stratum. Here again the idea of 'dispossession' is important since it reminds us that;

"Many workers who are not 'deprived' in the official sense live in permanent danger of entering the ranks of the deprived; and that they share in any case many of the disadvantages which afflict the deprived."⁽⁸¹⁾

Indeed the work of Brown and Harris⁽⁸²⁾ suggests that stressful life events experienced by peripheral workers and their families are more numerous and more severe than those experienced by central workers.

At another level what Murray and Lewis⁽⁸³⁾ before him do is think of the culture of the poor in wholly negative and separatist terms. Take for example the so-called absence of a work ethic. It never occurs to these writers that much of the work that the working class is required to do is routine and mind numbing. It is hardly surprising then that the prospect of such work is met with mixed feelings. The Willis study⁽⁸⁴⁾ validates the lads' understanding and by extension working class understanding of the fact that a lot of work is "shit". Just as the lads develop a counter culture which is subversive of school culture, shop floor culture contests the control and understanding of management even if only in limited ways. The question then is not one of separate cultures but of shared contradictions and orientations to employment amongst peripheral workers including the surplus fragments.

If we return to the Shankhouse population then clearly much of this population is marginal to the employment system. But marginal does not mean unimportant since the presence of the unemployed has fear inducing consequences for those in work and tends to reduce their resistance to the reorganisation of working practices. The reserve surplus population therefore serves a function of the classic reserve army by disciplining labour within the workplace thereby helping to facilitate the accumulation process. On the other hand Bauman⁽⁸⁵⁾ questions the idea of a Reserve Army since many of the unemployed may never work again. For me this formulation leaves out of account the "demonstration" effects of unemployment on those in work and overlooks the fact that the emergence of a reserve surplus population tends to lower wages in unskilled and part-time work. Equally it is too pessimistic a conclusion which neglects political and institutional change as a route back to near full employment.

Rejecting the use of the term underclass because of its pathological implications leaves the Shankhouse population still to be designated. All of this population can be thought of as working class constituted by peripheral workers and a reserve surplus population. The bulk of Shankhouse households are then dependent upon welfare payments either as their only source of income or to top up low wages. Once "on the welfare" especially if you are unemployed, means attempting to exist on benefits set well below the level of the average wage. The point being, as William Beveridge remarked;

"The less tolerable the lot of the idler, the greater the incentive to industry."⁽⁸⁶⁾

In other words, benefits needed to be set at a level which would discourage those in work from leaving the labour market and encourage those out of work to get on their bikes and look for employment. In this way the benefit system was constructed to underpin the labour market and stimulate the work ethic.

HOUSING, PERIPHERAL WORKERS AND THE RESERVE SURPLUS POPULATION

The Conservative Government on coming to power in 1979 made the sale of council houses a key part of its legislative programme. The Prime Minister in the debate on the Queen's speech summing up the new age and the related philosophy in the following way;

"Thousands of people in council houses and new towns came out to support us for the first time because they wanted a chance to buy their own houses. We will give every council tenant the right to purchase their own home at a substantial discount on the market price and with 100% mortgages for those who need them. This will be a giant stride towards making a reality of Anthony Eden's dream of a property owning democracy. It will do something else. It will give more of our people that freedom and mobility and that prospect of handing something onto their children and grandchildren which owner occupation provides."(87)

While there had been sales of council houses in the past what was new was the scale of the expected sales and the fact that the right to buy was now part of a broad strategy to reduce state provision across a whole range of welfare services. Moreover, as the reference to a property owning democracy and to inheritance indicates the selling of public assets was presented both as a redistribution of

wealth, as a chance of accumulating wealth and of becoming upwardly mobile by entry on to the housing ladder. At the same time dismantling the public rented sector was seen by the Conservatives as a means of weakening allegiance to the Labour Party. The calculation being that more home owners would mean more actual and potential Conservative voters.

It is not my intention at this point to discuss the relationship between home ownership ideology and political allegiance except to say that the matter is much more complicated than suggested by Tory statements and left fundamentalism. For the present I want to consider the effects of the right to buy in relation to Cramlington, bearing in mind the context of cuts in expenditure on housing investment leading to the virtual collapse of new council house building.

As of the 15th March 1988 Blyth Borough had agreed to sell 2,638 council houses representing 27% of its total stock of 9,834 public sector houses.⁽⁸⁸⁾ However the spread of sales was not uniform across all of the Borough's estates. Even within Cramlington, with its stock of good quality council housing certain estates showed a higher propensity of sales than others. For example, Shankhouse saw only 5% of houses sold while at Lanercost 42% of houses moved into private ownership. When the Borough as a whole is examined then Shankhouse comes bottom of the league table for right to buy sales while Solingen comes top with 78% of its stock sold (see Table 59). Indeed there appears to be a loose relationship between unemployment and right to buy sales, with sales higher on those estates with relatively low unemployment rates.

Table 59

The Right to Buy as at 15th March 1988 in Blyth Valley

Area	Housing Stock	Appl. Forms Sent	Appl. Forms Returned	Notices Agreeing Right to Buy	% Sold	Cramlington Only Rank	All Estates Rank
CRAMLINGTON							
Allensgreen/ Chesterhill	555	258	208	204	37%	2	5
Cambo/Barrasford	452	122	101	99	22%	5	12
Hostel Estate	295	125	97	96	32%	4	7
Lanercost/Klondyke	186	93	80	78	42%	1	4
Sunnyside/ Nelson Village	238	49	46	45	19%	6	14
Shankhouse	442	49	23	23	5%	8	17
Mayfield/Sea View	242	110	88	84	35%	3	6
East Hartford	192	37	31	29	15%	7	15
SEATON DELAVAL/ NEW HARTLEY							
<u>Seghill</u>	462	127	103	98	21%		13
<u>Seaton Sluice</u>	314	117	84	81	26%		10
BLYTH TOWN							
North Farm Areas	608	125	90	81	13%		16
Bolam	92	80	64	63	68%		2
Solingen	112	113	92	88	78%		1
Poets Estate	425	154	116	110	26%		10
Avenues	1,095	349	262	254	23%		11
Miscellaneous	158	32	24	21	13%		16
<u>Newsham</u>	670	124	108	103	15%		15
<u>Cowpen Estate</u>	1,542	529	462	451	29%		8
<u>Cowpen Farm</u>	559	360	294	290	52%		3
GRAND TOTAL	9,834	3,415	2,727	2,638			

What we seem to be seeing is a twofold process whereby those in regular work or those who have retired with savings are taking advantage of the right to buy while those in a weak market position are excluded. The local authority is then left with an increasing proportion of its tenants who are unskilled, on low incomes, are irregularly employed or are dependent on welfare benefits. In short those marginalised in the labour market.

In contrast to a position where owner occupation was predominantly a middle strata tenure, good quality council housing a tenure of the skilled working class and the poorest section of the population was catered for by the private landlord there has been a shift towards council housing serving only the marginalised population. The right to buy adding another layer to Cramlington's already stratified and differentiated owner occupation sector which is becoming more and more the mass tenure.

From material presented in the previous chapter it was clear that the provision of public sector housing for workers on Cramlington's industrial estates was a necessary part of the County's modernisation strategy. However, the Shankhouse estate came on line in the late 70's just as Cramlington's industries began to shed workers. Likewise, in the Blyth Borough area (excluding Cramlington) from which 30% of the Shankhouse population was drawn, manufacturing employment declined rapidly between 1974 and 1984 as did employment in coal mining with the last pit closing in 1986.

The fate of Shankhouse cannot then be divorced from changes at the economic base of which, in a sense, Shankhouse was an integral part. Potential labour power was therefore assembled at Shankhouse just when Cramlington's factories no longer needed that labour. Over

time existing Shankhouse tenants lost their jobs and were trapped within a shrinking council house sector, while other tenants moved down from owner occupation due to job loss or divorce. But for workers with even a modest but regular income or where husband was working full-time and wife part-time, Cramlington provided an opportunity to enter owner occupation since in 1987 for example second hand link houses were selling for £22,000.⁽⁸⁹⁾

The concentration of the marginal population at Shankhouse is therefore to be explained by changes at the economic base together with the extension of owner occupation downwards, the effects of the right to buy and the collapse of new council house building. The result being to create a widening divide between public sector tenants and owner occupiers.

CLASS AND SUBJECTIVITY

I now want to deal with a set of arguments which I touched on at the beginning of this chapter and which link class to political party and to notions of solidarity and community. The suggestion is that the Labour Party vote has declined, communities have been fractured and displaced and solidarity is a thing of the past. What marks Britain in the 1980's is the growth of an atomised and consumer orientated working class which is egoistic, privatised and home centred.

A number of criticisms can be made of these claims. First is the tying of class to Party and by extension to a particular set of values. Clearly, what individuals think is important for action but the decline of the Labour vote is not the equivalent of the disappearance of the working class. Historically the formation of the working class preceded the founding of the Labour Party and if the

Party disappeared tomorrow the working class would continue to exist. Indeed there is a level at which it is beside the point what the class either individually or collectively thinks as expressed through the vote or in any other way. This level is captured in the distinction between a class "in itself" as a class "for itself".⁽⁹⁰⁾ The working class "in itself" is an objective collectivity and is the outcome of dispossession and lack of control in the workplace as distinct from a class "for itself" which is bound up with contents of consciousness. If we attempt to think of class only in content of consciousness terms we miss the objectivity of class and are left reliant upon self reporting for establishing class.

But what of the characterisation of the working class as privatised, home centred and pecuniary instrumentalists. How valid is this picture in reality and how adequate the means at arriving at such a characterisation. For a start it is worth remembering that approximately two thirds of the population who voted in recent general elections did not vote Conservative. Second, in 1988 the British Social Attitudes Survey reported that;

"despite all the exhortations over the last eight years only a minority of the public embraced the enterprise culture."⁽⁹¹⁾

and;

"to the extent that attitudes have moved they have become less sympathetic to the central tenets of the Thatcher revolution."⁽⁹²⁾

This does not seem to be the story of a working class convinced of the values of Thatcherism and devoid of altruism.

As to the shift towards privatism and home centredness Marshall⁽⁹³⁾ and his colleagues, on the basis of an extensive nationwide sample, reported that work although not central was important in most people's lives. Indeed very few people could think of an activity that was more important to them than work. But while work was not central neither was home and there appeared to be;

"no wholesale retreat into the home as an alternative or compensatory source of meaning and fulfilment."⁽⁹⁴⁾

In fact given the degree to which residence had become dissociated from local sources of employment it was striking to find that;

"half of those in employment can number friends among their workmates and that over 80% of these friendships are subsequently pursued in non-work contexts."⁽⁹⁵⁾

Moreover, the fracturing of community and the atomisation of individuals is only one side of the story and leaves out of account attempts to reconstruct community and re-establish friendship networks and associations.

But if the "pessimistic" characterisation of the working class is invalid it is so because of the inadequacies of ideal type and dualist thinking which helps constitute that characterisation. Here the assumption seems to be that a "heroic" and fully class conscious working class existed sometime in the past but no longer exists. Reasons are then found to explain this deviation from the past in terms which produce yet another ideal type working class only this

time it is an egoistic and privatised collectivity. Error is therefore piled upon error since, I would argue, the working class as a collectivity has never been wholly revolutionary nor wholly egoistic.

Added to the one sidedness arising from ideal type analysis there is also the deficiency flowing from dualistic thinking. This means that either work or home is considered central with one sphere ruling out the other. Given such a choice it would be easy to present the home owning population of Cramlington as privatised and home centred but it would be largely a product of methodology. For as Marshall's⁽⁹⁶⁾ work testifies the posing of work against home is really a false choice which is borne out by the fact that individual respondents did not think in these absolutist terms.

HOUSING CLASS AND CONSUMPTION

If we think back to Wright's analysis of class it was clearly rooted within the relations of production broadly defined. Weberian sociology by contrast concerns itself with market capacity and with the many sources of stratification and division which are held to cross cut occupational class. In this context Rex and Moore⁽⁹⁷⁾ argued that a distinction can be made between "housing classes" and "production classes". From the labour market people derived their occupational class location and from the housing market their housing class location. The two systems operating separately so that it was possible for people having the same occupational location to have different housing class locations. For example, a miner who is in a Coal Board house is in a different housing class location to a miner owner occupier. Rex and Moore going on to distinguish six housing classes comprising outright suburban owner occupiers, mortgaged

suburban owner occupiers, council tenants in good accommodation, council tenants in short life accommodation, landlords of inner city subdivided houses and tenants who rent privately.

Now the immediate problem with the Rex and Moore typology is that it is really a number of tenure categories. As such the typology could be expanded to include people in housing association houses, bed and breakfast accommodation and warden assisted accommodation, etc.

Working in the same mode for Cramlington we could make ever finer distinctions between owner occupiers in terms of quality, price, location and size of house and call each category a housing class. But this is to confuse class in the sense of a grouping with similar properties with class at the level of meaning. If, for example, we return to Marshall's⁽⁹⁸⁾ work it is apparent that most people see class solely as a function of occupation and not housing. Therefore to talk of "housing classes" is to impose a manufactured construct upon reality.

Nor is it sensible to designate home owners as a distinct "property class". Not only are home owners internally diverse but as Saunders conceded in his self critique "class relations are constituted only through the social organisation of production"⁽⁹⁹⁾ and hence it is confusing and invalid to extend class to housing.

All this is not to say that distinctions are not made both between owner occupiers and tenants and within these two categories. However the key concept here is that of status. In the public sector, for example, housing officials routinely make judgements about who is and is not respectable with the respectable getting the most desirable houses.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ At the same time home ownership for some is a way of demonstrating "respectability" and of affirming achievement and status

position. As one of Cramlington's owner occupiers of a top of the range Bellway house remarked;

"Keeping up appearances are important and we wanted something we could bring our friends to."(101)

Equally since the same Bellway house in Cramlington was £20,000 cheaper than one in Gosforth you could give the appearance of being worth more than you were.

For those who had fallen out of owner occupation into the council house sector due to job loss it was not only the absence of employment that came as a blow. As one respondent said;

"We thought when we decided to buy that we were getting on in the world. Now I don't know. It's like we have taken a step down and are back where we started."(102)

While a council tenant reflecting on those who had bought their council houses commented that;

"They start hanging new front doors and have double glazing fitted. It's as if they're too good for us now."(103)

On the other hand someone who had just exercised their right to buy felt that;

"It won't make any difference, neighbours will still be neighbours."(104)

The same person referring to owner occupiers at the north end of Cramlington as "snobs". All these comments indicating that status

concerns were current in Cramlington. Although whether these concerns are ultimately important is another question.

What is important though is the coupling of status concerns to consumption. Within Cramlington, for example, both Leech and Bellway builders have show houses. However, it is not just bricks and mortar that is being sold, it is an image and a lifestyle which these homes signify. Consumption giving the illusion of freedom and choice but it is a choice and a freedom within limits. The limits set fundamentally by income and resources and by production and what is produced. After all for £80,000 there are only two similar styles of new detached house available at Cramlington. Also, if we dig a little deeper it is apparent that the very act of consumption produces its own need. Once the owner occupier has experienced the pleasures of a separate utility room, the en-suite shower room and the two car garage, they are locked into a set of needs from which there is no turning back and which are constantly stimulated by, amongst other things, endless house and home magazines. Within this circuit the propensity is to consume ever more. A propensity which in the Thatcher era was given every stimulus possible and which was equated with freedom itself. Therefore work might be the realm of non-freedom but real freedom was to be had in the sphere of consumption. A potent ideology but one which neglected to mention that our choices are constructed and our freedom has limits. Indeed in terms of freedom to consume the reserve surplus population is relatively unfree and consumption in general dependent upon exploitation in production.

While the idea of home owners as a distinct "property class" was abandoned tenure was considered an important source of division due to the part it played in constituting consumption cleavages. Saunders arguing that;

"Housing tenure, as one expression of the division between privatised and collectivized areas of consumption is analytically distinct from the question of class; it is neither the basis of class formations - nor the expression of them - but rather the single most pertinent factor in the determination of consumption cleavages."(105)

With consumption cleavages coming to outweigh class alignments as the privatisation of welfare proceeds. Hamnett and Randolph agreeing with Saunders on the significance of consumption divisions and suggesting that;

"Changes in the structure of both the housing and labour markets are autonomously constituted processes. It follows that there is no direct or necessary correspondence between the two markets."(106)

These statements asserting both the potency of consumption and the separation of consumption and production. The importance of home ownership for Saunders arising from the fact that capital gains could be made at the point of sale generating wealth for the owner occupier independent of the wage. But reflecting on Cramlington leads me to question a conceptualisation which separates consumption from production. As I have indicated in the previous chapters, public sector housing and to a limited extent owner occupied housing was necessary for assembling a pool of labour for Cramlington factories. Then the constraints of the economic base are felt in a number of ways. First in the collapse of manufacturing and mining employment at Cramlington and Blyth which produces places like Shankhouse. Second, in order to realise any capital gain house sellers require buyers. If

an economy experiences generalised depression and job insecurity it has an impact on the housing market by shrinking the volume of sales and increasing repossessions thus bringing more cheap houses on to an already depressed housing market. With a glut of houses and relatively few buyers house prices fall from earlier peaks producing the phenomenon of negative equity.

In any case capital gain in the context of class only becomes important if the gains are so large and realisable that they free the individual from reliance upon a wage as the main source of income. For the vast majority of Cramlington home owners capital gains are likely to be relatively small with the wage and hence the necessity to work constituting the main means of livelihood. In which case work and the wage continues to be of central concern. Meanwhile at the level of conceptualisation the splitting of consumption from production with consumption an autonomous sphere is unwarranted. In practice production location sets limits on consumption while the economic base places constraints upon the aggregate level of what is consumed. More generally, as Harloe⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ points out, Saunders writes as if the only basis for consumption was the growth of private incomes in the post war years. While this is true as far as it goes it neglects the fact that owner occupation, for example, has been massively underpinned by the alternative welfare state in the form of tax relief. Equally Saunders assumes that privatisation is a non problematic process and that the great majority of the population will meet their needs in a privatised way. As Harloe⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ recognises, given the increase in the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement throughout the 90's the continued ability of the State to provide a subsidy on home ownership is questionable. Second, income levels

place limits on the use of privatised provision. For example I could find no one, even in the most expensive of Cramlington's housing, who made use of private health care or private schools. This confirms my impression, shared by local respondents, that the great majority of Cramlington's home owners still rely upon the wage as their main source of income and still look to State health and education provision to meet their needs. Indeed it would appear that a fair percentage of Cramlington's home owners are also employed within the central and local State.

HOUSING, CLASS AND POLITICS

I alluded to Dunleavy's⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ work at the beginning of this chapter. Broadly he tries to indicate the salience of divisions arising from consumption by relating consumption to voting patterns and to the formation of political constituencies.

Essentially Dunleavy argues that collective consumption as embodied in the Welfare State post 1945 was a key factor constituting the political unity of the working class while drawing in elements of the middle class in support. With the development of privatised forms of consumption this political unity has been broken up. The ability of the most privileged layer of the working class to gain access to privatised forms of welfare providing a constituency to be mobilised by politicians of the right. Dunleavy then finding a correlation between tenure and vote and an increasing tendency for those with greater access to privatised welfare to vote Conservative.

Undoubtedly Dunleavy is correct in seeking to put consumption questions on the agenda. A major difficulty, however, is deciding how much weight, if any, to give consumption as a factor influencing either voting or ideology generally. Does consumption location

outweigh occupational class as Saunders thinks or are the two interrelated. At a more fundamental level correlation does not mean cause. Therefore while there is an association between tenure and voting behaviour the relationship is a probabilistic one rather than of the type that says tenure causes you to vote in a particular direction or that there is a one to one correspondence between vote and tenure. This means that although owner occupiers are more likely to vote Conservative and council tenants more likely to vote Labour there are Labour home owners and Conservative voting council tenants.

The other difficulty is that tenure could be a surrogate for class or for "lives in the south" so that the supposed tenure effects on voting are really occupational class or place effects or the result of some unmeasured aspect. Dunleavy could therefore be accused of reductionism and indeed this is the thrust of Ball's⁽¹¹⁰⁾ criticism when he remarks that the determination of voting is complex and that there is no universal political ideology arising from owner occupation.

My final remarks in connection with owner occupation and voting Conservative are to do with time, contingency and place. In other words we are not talking about absolutes rather we are dealing with a relationship which is historically specific. The fact that owner occupiers tend to vote Conservative is a snapshot of a particular time and set of circumstances and therefore contingent. Just as a number of council tenants moving from Labour to Conservative over the issue of the right to buy could be a function of momentary interest. Moreover, if we add the effect of place then the tendency of home owners to vote Conservative varies from region to region.

Lastly it should be remembered that Dunleavy's work is looking at the relationship between tenure and vote rather than tenure and values. Duke and Edgell⁽¹¹¹⁾ finding that consumption sector had little influence on attitudes to trade unions, strikes, business power, nationalization and income distribution. These dimensions being much more sharply related to occupational class (using Wright's schema).

As far as Blyth Valley is concerned the Labour Party majority at Parliamentary elections has slumped from over 20,000 in the early 70's to less than 1,000 in 1987. However, the major benefactor of this drift from Labour has been the Alliance Party, with the Conservatives a poor third. Within Cramlington, the wards of East Cramlington and Cramlington Parkside (which contains Shankhouse and the owner occupied sector of Parkside) were both Labour until 1982. After that the Alliance gained Parkside in the Borough elections of 1983 and in the County elections of 1984. Going on to increase their majority in the Borough elections of 1987.

Clearly something is happening here but how far tenure in itself has anything to do with the shift to the Alliance is debatable especially given both Labour and Alliance Party support for owner occupation.

In the final analysis houses do not vote, people do, and if we consider Alliance Party support then there is evidence from canvas returns that the Alliance vote strengthens as one moves up the housing market. Moreover, a high percentage of Alliance activists are employed in the public sector or are self employed. What this suggests is that rather than tenure the Alliance vote is a result of relative social mobility and, according to local Alliance Party

activists, is pro service but anti high rates and keen on efficiency savings. In essence the Alliance Party presents itself as a new politics as distinct from the old parties of Labour and the Conservatives. As transcending class politics by taking from the best of the old parties. It therefore resonates with those who find themselves in contradictory class locations.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began by indicating that part of the Thatcher project was directed at widening the social base of Conservatism while simultaneously disorganising labour. It is within this context that the privatisation programme has to be set although clearly it also opened up new sites for capital and provided windfall funds for the Treasury. Some commentators such as Riddle⁽¹¹²⁾ playing down the novelty of Thatcherism while others maintained that a distinct and new accumulation strategy was in the making. My sympathies lying with the latter interpretation. For although the disdain for the poor, the holding down of welfare benefits and the 'on your bike' philosophy was nothing new it was the combination of these elements together with their articulation to other policies which marked a qualitatively different strategy.

Thatcherism therefore strove to create a legal and moral climate which legitimated harsh welfare and industrial relations policies. A politics of fear was underpinned by a strong State seeking to strengthen the hand of capital. Within Cramlington industrial managers how felt free to change working practices and pay levels and to threaten labour.

In terms of change at the economic base a number of features stand out. First is the decline of manufacturing at Cramlington and

Blyth and the elimination of the coal industry as the last pit in Blyth Valley was closed. These changes particularly impacting upon male employment. Across the country as a whole there was a shift from mining to a small manufacturing base and an expanded service sector with an increase in women's participation in the workforce and in the extent of part-time work. Wage levels for males and females falling below the national average and well below the average for the South East.

The County Council identifying the major problem as a lack of supply of jobs. However, the strategy adopted to tackle this deficit was limited and contradictory. Amounting to little more than pleading with capital to locate in the County and targeting potential "growth sectors" such as tourism, pharmaceuticals, food processing and clothing. Left out of account was the fact that high capital investment projects do not necessarily equal high numbers of jobs. Nor was there any real consideration given to whether quality jobs could be guaranteed. Instead the emphasis was on providing flexible labour for capital and an implicit assumption made that the interests of capital and labour were identical.

I focused on Cramlington in order to highlight the divergence between the owner occupied sector of Parkside and the Shankhouse estate. The population of Shankhouse consisting of peripheral workers and a reserve surplus whereas Parkside contained central workers. These two populations relating to different labour markets so that the explanation for the status of Shankhouse rests primarily with the contraction of the manufacturing base at Cramlington and Blyth. Unemployment is therefore a supply side problem and explanations which attempt to blame the victim are to be rejected as inadequate at the

level of cause and suspected as ideological constructs. To quote C.W. Mills from a book written thirty-four years ago;

"When, in a city of 100,000 only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed."⁽¹¹³⁾

While the underclass thesis threatens to construct a Chinese Wall between the employed and the unemployed the notion of dispossession can be deployed to re-establish a connection between those in and out of work. The unemployed representing the most deprived section of the working class which itself is defined in line with Wright's formulation as that class which has only its labour power to sell and lacks control over the labour process and over the labour of others. This relational definition yielding an expanded working class as opposed to static conceptions which locate the working class in production alone.

The other set of arguments which while admitting to a working class see that class as privatised, home centred, egoistic and instrumentalist. However, I would argue that this conceptualisation is overdrawn to the point of caricature. The basis for such a conception resting on ideal type analysis and dualistic thinking. Marshall et al finding that work was still important for most people although not central while there was no retreat into the home as an alternative source of meaning.

If we return to Margaret Thatcher's celebrated words about creating a property owning democracy and remember that one of the aims of privatisation was to extend the social base of Conservatism, we can easily be led to thinking that home ownership makes you vote Conservative. That the right to buy, the extension of mortgage credit and the house price boom of the 80's was part and parcel of creating an extended labour aristocracy inclined to the Conservatives. Now while there is some validity to this argument it can be pushed too far. For in regional and place specific terms the gains to be made from housing varied enormously with house price inflation in the South East after 1983 far outstripping that in the North.

Equally, it is invalid to view consumption as an autonomous sphere. For most people, work and therefore income, place limits on consumption and on the extent to which they can gain access to privatised forms of meeting needs. In Cramlington Parkside, while housing needs were met through owner occupation, educational and health needs still relied massively on State provision with leisure needs serviced through mixed forms ranging from "home entertainment" to the Concordia Leisure Centre, a local authority facility.

But once we admit that production location puts limits on consumption we also have to acknowledge that there is a strong occupational class gradient to tenure (see previous chapter). Therefore although owner occupation has increased amongst all socio-economic groups we may accept, following Hamnett, that;

"class is a reasonably good guide to consumption location at an aggregate level."(114)

Furthermore, consumption can;

"reflect, compound and intensify the underlying inequalities of class which shape access to consumption."(115)

So that, for example, wealthy home owners in expensive homes are likely to experience a greater degree of house price inflation than the more modest or marginal owner occupiers thus widening the gap between them and between the peripheral workers and reserve surplus population in Shankhouse.

In addition, while change at the economic base goes a long way in explaining the position of Shankhouse, it is worth remembering that Cramlington's owner occupiers are also workers even if relatively central ones in often contradictory class locations and living up to their credit limits. They are, therefore, not immune from economic change and the restructuring of the Welfare State.

Rather than voting Conservative Parkside's residents have overwhelmingly swung to the Alliance Party but the explanation for this lies not with tenure as such but with the occupants' limited social mobility, their contradictory class locations and, I suspect, in their perceptions of the Labour Party.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE DISPOSSESSED AND THE COMFORTABLE

Introduction

This chapter is based on a limited number of interviews carried out in Cramlington at Shankhouse and Parkside in June 1988. Its purpose is to flesh out the people behind the labels and to expand on some issues touched on in the previous chapter. The interviews have been assembled under the headings "the dispossessed" and "the comfortable" in order to indicate a major line of cleavage, namely that the dispossessed are unemployed while the comfortable are able to sell their labour or live in a household in which there is an employed adult.

The Dispossessed

John was 24 years old and single when I met him. He had spent four years in the army just after leaving school but when I spoke to him he had been unemployed for two years. He had attended numerous job interviews without success and complained that the Job Centre kept making him apply for security guard jobs because of his army background. An option he disliked since the hours were long, the money hopeless, there were no paid holidays and it was something he did not want to do anyway. Still he had to go through the motions in order to demonstrate that he was actively seeking work.

After two years, John's interview clothes were becoming shabby. His hair was clean and long and sometimes worn in a pony tail. He would cut it if an employer wanted him to but not for interviews. As he said;

"They will have to take me as I am although once you're in its different."

Almost none of John's friends had a job. They spent time in each other's company drinking tea, watching T.V. or sometimes going sea fishing. John explained that;

"We all support each other and try to keep our spirits up. If any of us gets money from a "fiddle job" we treat the others to a few pints."

One of John's mates, Kevin, aged 44, had just cashed his dole cheque of £44.25p. He had been made redundant from the Parks Department of the local authority. He told me;

"I gan doon the Job Centre and they say you're just too old, I mean too old at 44, what have I got to look forward to."

Kevin paused for a moment and continued to reflect upon his predicament;

"When you're working, you sleep better, eat better and feel better all round. Now I'm on the dole I wonder what I'm going to do from one day to the next. I just visit friends, drink coffee and listen to records seven days a week."

Although my mention of Prime Minister Thatcher brought an edge to the conversation. Kevin remarking;

"That bloody woman, it's a pity the I.R.A. hadn't succeeded. We'd be better off without her and the rest of them. What have they ever done for the likes of us?"

I asked Anne, aged 22, an unemployed single mother with two young children, how much she had to live on. Her Supplementary Benefit plus family allowance made a total of £57 per week. This was how she and her two children existed on £57;

(a) Rent and rates	- 100% rebate
(b) Food and kitchen materials	- £22.75p.
(c) Catalogue	- £2.00p.
(d) T.V. Rental	- £2.00p.
(e) Hire purchase of fridge/freezer	- £2.30p.
(f) Gas	- £2.50p.
(g) Electric	- £9.85p.
(h) Telephone	- £3.00p.
(i) Toiletries	- £2.00p.
(j) Cigarettes	- £7.00p.
(k) Treats for the children	- £4.50p.
Total	<u>£57.90p.</u>

Anne's council house was clean, tidy and furnished with a mixture of cheap new furniture and serviceable secondhand items. The house was carpeted throughout except for a stair carpet which Anne said she could never afford.

What Anne dreamt of was being able to buy a joint of meat occasionally instead of the usual fish fingers and hamburgers. Sometimes things got difficult and when she was short of money she would miss a meal or just eat sandwiches so that her children did not go without.

Anne could not remember when she last bought anything for herself or had a night out although she conceded that cigarettes were a luxury she could not give up. She did not possess boots or winter shoes and was not looking forward to the day when her son would be demanding the most expensive trainers available.

For Anne, holidays were something you saw on T.V. travel programmes. Even trips to Newcastle at £3 return by bus were prohibitively expensive. Yet despite the grind of existing on a meagre income Anne had given her father £2 a week to help him out during the miners' strike. She had always supported Labour but what the strike had done was make her think more about politics. Her conclusions amounting to scepticism concerning the Labour leadership and a suspicion that Labour politicians would say anything to get back into government. She could see it was an unequal and unfair society and she wanted a decent income on the dole but doubted the Labour leadership's commitment to fundamental change.

The Comfortable (1)

Michael was married to Diane. She had left school at sixteen and gone straight into the North Eastern Electricity Board as an accounts clerk. Michael attended Newcastle University, got his degree (a 2:2 in English) and spent a year unemployed before joining the Civil Service. He now worked in the vehicle licensing department and described his job in this way;

"It's just staff management. The scope for decision making is very small. I am responsible for making sure that the twenty people under me do their job."

Diane and Michael were in their late twenties and early thirties respectively. Diane's father trained as a coach builder but now worked for Bristol Myers as a machine maintenance engineer. Michael's father was an electrical engineer at N.E.I. Diane's mother worked as a receptionist for the North Tyneside Housing Department.

Diane had bought a house in Chapel Park, Newcastle, in 1979 for £19,500 and sold it in 1988 for £29,500, although over the years she had spent four thousand pounds on it. Michael had lived with his parents and then moved to private accommodation before living with Diane at Chapel Park. Their combined income in 1988 came to about £30,000 per year and as Michael said;

"The salaries we get keep us comfortable up here but we couldn't afford to live like this in London or the South."

In June 1987, they reserved a four bedroom detached Bellway home costing £58,000 at Cramlington Parkside. Michael explaining that the same house was more expensive elsewhere and that it had increased in value by £4,000 from when they reserved it to when they moved in in May 1988.

Diane showed me round and estimated that they had spent £5,000 on the house, excluding furniture, since they moved in. The kitchen was fully fitted with a recently installed extractor fan over the cooker. Built in wardrobes took up one wall of the master bedroom. A new marble fireplace with a coal effect gas fire featured in the living room. A Sony T.V. and video had just been bought within the last month. Next they planned to landscape the back garden and purchase garden furniture.

I noticed a squash racket in the hallway and Michael confirmed that both he and Diane were keen squash payers and that he had also joined the local golf club. They played squash once a week and Diane also participated in a keep fit class at the local leisure centre. Apart from that they dined out in Newcastle at least once a month. Otherwise they avoided the city centre and preferred to shop at the Metro Centre.

But even though Michael and Diane recognised their comfortable set up, this did not mean they had no concerns. Turning again to the subject of work Michael made it clear that;

"In the civil service it's all cost targets. Public service has gone out the window. It's reduce your costs but you still have to do the same or more work."

and

"all I do is implement policy I don't make policy. If the legislation is unpopular it's the local government officers and the civil servants like me who the public take it out on."

Moreover, although they were momentarily comfortable Michael worried that the squeeze on costs meant that his annual wage increase was not keeping up with average wage increases so that he was falling further and further behind. He resented the Government's enthusiasm for "geographical pay" so that someone in London doing the same job as himself earned more. Indeed with the holding down of pay increases he knew people at work who had overcommitted themselves and consequently they;

"couldn't make ends meet and had to take a night time job in a pub."

In Diane's case she resented the fact that you had to have a degree even to be considered for promotion within the Electricity Board. She had a lot of experience but no degree. Experience seemed to count for little, an attitude she considered to be "blinkered".

Both Diane and Michael voted Labour. Their parents voted Labour and they felt obliged to continue the tradition. However, it was more than a simple non-reflective habit. According to Michael;

"The Labour Party is about equality so that people who haven't a lot get a chance and aren't so disadvantaged. Whereas the Conservatives enhance the position of the better off so that the rich get rich and the poor get poorer."

As far as Michael was concerned times were changing but not necessarily for the better;

"We seem to be becoming a more and more materialistic society and forgetting about fairness. The National Health Service and comprehensive education was for all. Now it seems that if you can pay you can circumvent the whole system. It just doesn't seem fair."

Both of them had watched the inner city riots on television and knew that crime was increasing and detection was falling. They had seen how the miners' strike was policed and felt a profound unease;

"Crime seems to be increasing under the Tories and we seem to be reaching a stage where we've got a national police force which isn't impartial anymore and which the Government is using to do their dirty work for them. It's getting more like the United States than Britain."

They had friends in Hampshire and Potters Bar who they visited in 1987, staying in a three bedroom link house in Potters Bar valued at £100,000. They had seen the Docklands development and concluded that;

"It's a different way of life in the South. It's another world."

Moreover it was a world which seemed to have been built on the labour of the North and which appeared to them to be getting richer as the North got poorer;

"Where I lived in Throckley, you could look out towards Blyth and see sixteen pit heaps. Now there's none. At one time the coalfields of the North fed the South, if it was a bad winter the South froze because they couldn't get our coal. Yet they don't appear to be prepared to give us anything back. They take time and time again and compared to the investment in the South we get a trickle of funds. The Channel Tunnel for instance is going to benefit the South even more. Whenever there's any difficulty the first place to shut down is somewhere up here that's been established in a development area and cost the company nothing. Up here we've seen a polarization of the country. You've got those who have it in the South and those who haven't in the North."

The policies of the Conservatives seemed to them to be widening existing divisions and creating new divisions although Diane freely admitted that;

"Personally I've benefited from Thatcher and Conservatives."

However, she quickly added;

"But I don't think my family have or lots of other people."

Michael concluding that he thought the main difference between him and a Conservative voter was;

"They vote for what's in it for themselves whereas I consider the community as a whole and not just myself."

The Comfortable (2)

David was in his early forties and married with two school age children. His father and uncle had worked for N.E.I. and it was through his father's guidance that he left school at sixteen and joined N.E.I. as an apprentice engineer. At the time engineering seemed to offer a secure future and looking back he described his training in this way;

"The apprenticeship was second to none. N.E.I. had its own training workshop where you did electrical and welding work. They sent you on day release to college. It suited me and it helped N.E.I. in the long run because they were training you for what they wanted."

After finishing his apprenticeship, David was employed on the erection and repair of generating equipment. In 1977 he left N.E.I. and went to work for an American machine tool company (Dole Engineering) as a sales engineer. A job which involved working from home as one of the

company's North East representatives. His biggest volume customers being Caterpillar at Birtley, British Rail Engineering at Shildon and N.E.I. itself. But with the contraction of the engineering sector in the North East in the 80's, he was made redundant. As David put it;

"After the 1980's I could see no future in engineering so I asked myself what could I do that would allow me to be my own boss."

His solution was train as a driving instructor and set up his own driving school business with his wife doing the paperwork, answering the telephone and organising his appointments. Since he operated from home he had few overheads while he saw the value of self-employment resting on the fact that;

"All the decisions you take yourself. You rise and fall by your own initiative and don't have to answer to anyone but yourself. You are your own man and have no one looking over your shoulder."

At the same time his situation was somewhat precarious since any illness in the family disrupted business and moreover he was dependent upon a steady flow of customers for a regular income. For David the harder you worked the more money you made but the other side of the coin was that if you did this you never saw your family. David therefore tried not to give himself over to work. The result being that he was earning no more now than when he had been a sales engineer.

David and his wife had moved to Cramlington in 1973 from private rented accommodation just off Chillingham Road in Newcastle. They had

lived at their current address, a three bedroom semi, since that date and as David said;

"Our life is here ... we've made a lot of friends. I'm in the local cricket club and so are five others in this road. I'm also a school governor. We have friends round for meals and often we go out for meals. Our wives get together and play badminton on Thursdays and go out for a drink on Tuesday nights ... In fact we mix more here than we did in Heaton which I suppose is because there were a lot more elderly people in Heaton whereas here everyone's our age or younger."

David knew some friends who had got on the housing ladder and he wished them well but as far as he was concerned he was happy where he was since;

"I've put down roots here, I've got friends, we've got a reasonable standard and what more out of life do you want."

Our conversation turned to family background and political outlook. David's father had been chairman of the Gateshead Branch of the A.E.U. and secretary of the Jarrow Labour Party. David had been a trade union member most of his working life and voted for the Labour Party until 1985 when he changed to the Alliance Party. As he explained it a number of factors had precipitated his shift of political allegiance;

"The Labour Party Conference of 1985 was the last straw. I was horrified to see people being shouted down from the floor."

But even before that David had had doubts about Labour Party democracy, the legitimacy of the trade union block vote and about the wisdom of pushing for wage claims which he felt companies could not afford;

"The block vote means that it's a few who are taking decisions since only a small minority attend branch meetings to elect delegates who then vote on behalf of everyone. It's fundamentally undemocratic. That's why I agree with the Tories on secret ballots for the election of union officials and to decide over strike action. A lot of clout inside the Labour Party is held by a few people and it's not right."

Having switched to the Alliance Party it was not so much that he had changed as the Labour Party that had changed;

"I've always thought like this, it's the Labour Party that's moved to the left. If Labour moves back to the centre, which it's starting to do, I'd think about voting Labour again."

Moreover, although David had changed his vote, his family had stayed with Labour while other friends in Cramlington Parkside had, like him, moved from Labour to Alliance. In practice he could see little difference between himself and his Labour friends rather it was inter Party antagonism which he viewed as sterile;

"What I believe is getting away from a situation where whatever the Tories did Labour said was bad and whatever Labour did the Tories deplored. That attitude is rubbish,

total tripe. The country's got to be run and you've got to have consensus. There's good in Labour and Tory policies so why can't we take the best of both."

What worried David though was the impact of Conservative policies and the underfunding of the National Health Service and the education system;

"It appears that the well off are getting even better off and the less well off are always going to be less well off. The tax cuts for the rich are immoral when people need hip replacements, when thousands are in bed and breakfast accommodation and when people are sleeping in cardboard boxes in London. That money could have been spent where it was most needed."

Yet experience told David that it was a tough world out there. He had been made redundant once and had watched the engineering sector collapse around him. He now hoped that his children would be;

"Sufficiently well educated to make their way in the world."

He had considered private education so that they would get what he believed would be a head start and also because;

"If there are two children and all other things are equal the employer will choose the one educated privately."

However, the cost of going private was out of the question, so it was a matter of fighting to ensure a highly resourced state education system not just for his children but for others as well.

David still thought of himself as working class since he had to work for a living and did not have an independent source of income. He felt that the;

"vast majority of people around here consider themselves working class."

Although he acknowledged;

"a class of unemployed people and people on Government schemes who have to grovel around to make ends meet."

Ideally David wanted to see a society in which;

"The harder you worked the more you get but with no one neglected and the unemployed receiving a decent income."

While at an international level David hoped for;

"a non-nuclear world and a shift towards alternative power sources in order to give a boost to the engineering industry."

In this context, he thought it was beyond belief that;

"a nuclear power station was planned at Druridge Bay when millions of tons of recoverable coal reserves lay beneath the ground."

Observations from Interviews

The two populations of Shankhouse and Parkside can be divided along a number of dimensions. I categorised one as the dispossessed and the other as the comfortable although you could equally well use

designations such as the excluded and the included in terms of access to consumption.

As consumers we are constantly exhorted to buy and reminded that there's plenty to do, places to go and experiences to enjoy. But it is not just egoistic consumption for in so far as consumption is the final stage of a productive circuit we can take comfort in doing our bit to boost a faltering economy or so it would seem at first glance.

We are free to buy in the marketplace except that not everyone has the same opportunity to consume. In which case how real is our so called freedom. People such as Anne, John and Kevin are doubly disadvantaged. Denied regular work and disposable income they are relatively excluded from consumption, from the "leisure lifestyle" of the Sunday colour supplements and from a whole range of possibilities open to those with money in their pockets.

The world of Anne, John and Kevin is severely circumscribed. Not for them the regular meals out, the weekly buying trips to the Metro Centre, the annual or twice annual holiday in the sun or the regular night out at the pub. They are relatively unable to participate in the spree of consumption whether it be in or outside the home.

I noted, for example, that Michael and Diane played squash. But buying the kit, racket, shoes, balls and paying fees costs money and is premised on adequate disposable income. You are talking about £150 before you even step on to the squash court. These leisure possibilities are not options which are open to everyone.

But while Anne and John and millions like them are excluded they can see the spectacle of consumption going on around them. Be it in the material form of £80,000 Bellway houses or in the Mecca of the

Metro Centre or through advertising. Consumption as a presence constantly reminds you of the things you have not got and the world you cannot participate in and for many it just does not seem fair.

At another level consumption is a sign of participation and of being part of society with Thatcherite ideology attempting to go one step further by associating consumption with virtue. From this perspective the greater your conspicuous consumption the greater your virtue. At this point, however, a massive contradiction appears since the wider the gap between the dispossessed and the comfortable then the more the dispossessed become aware of their marginal status and the harder it is to maintain the myth of "one nation".

If we think of the comfortable it soon becomes clear that consumption does not exist in a vacuum. When they go to the Metro Centre, Michael and Diane might consume a "Big Mac" served by an underpaid hireling of a multi-national fast food chain. A low paid waitress will present them with a bill at the end of an evening in a restaurant. Invisible labourers will clean up the refuse of consumption. Consumption then is dependent upon a pool of service labour constituted as peripheral labour in places like Shankhouse.

Secondly, Michael and Diane are illustrative of a couple who have made modest gains from owner occupation. They have been able to equip and furnish their new home but it is on the basis of credit as well as the outright purchase of goods. Moreover, the sourcing of what was bought was instructive. Japanese T.V. and audio technology, a German made fitted kitchen, a Scandinavian fridge/freezer assembled in Italy, a South Korean micro-wave oven, all reflecting the fact that on a wider canvas the boom of the late 80's was a credit led import based one.

Turning once again to the politics of Shankhouse and Parkside. What struck me was the lack of popularity of and attachment to the Conservative Party in both localities even if some of their policies were agreed with. Amongst the unemployed and the peripheral workforce, Labour was the party that was most often looked to but it was with a weary disenchantment and a fatalism that nothing much would change.

Amongst the comfortable some stayed with Labour while most had shifted to the Alliance. But whatever the Party label, there was much talk of a North/South divide, of people becoming worse off, of the collapse of manufacturing industry and the fact that the recovery was not that apparent in the North. From my conversations I felt that the Conservatives were seen as a Party of the South and that they would favour the South over the North.

Uniting Labour and Alliance voters that I talked to in Parkside was a pro-public service attitude. Privatisation was sometimes objected to in principle but more often the worry was that privatisation would benefit the few at the expense of the many reliant upon State services for meeting needs. David finding no objection to private schooling in principle and even considering it for his own children but also wanting a highly resourced State education system to be provided.

Lastly, it is worth remembering that Alliance Party support had only recently been formed and comprises in part a block of ex Labour voters. While this block objected to the leftward drift of the Labour Party they also objected to the "extremism" of the Thatcher Government.

So much for politics what about class? If we take someone like Michael then although he is in charge of twenty people he had relatively little influence over resources or over the aims and direction of the organisation which employs him. Working as a State employee his is not employed by capital but he clearly feels subject to pressures dictating that he increase his workload and achieve more with less resources. He regrets what he sees as the assault on the ethic of public service and accuses his employer, the Conservative Government, as not looking after its employees by holding down wage increases. Therefore he supports his union's efforts to defend wages and service conditions. As a manager he might have been expected to support the Conservatives, however his location as a State employee with circumscribed authority and power at a time when "value for money" was replacing the public service ethic had prompted him to vote Labour.

As an accounts clerk working for the Northern Electricity Board, Michael's wife Diane had no directive powers over the labour of others nor much discretion in her own work. In fact as I talked to her it became obvious that she felt undervalued and capable of better things but stuck in her position since "you had to have a degree to get on". What was significant was that although she thought that she had benefited from Conservative policy she felt that her family and many others had not. Clearly her vote was determined by more than immediate self interest.

David represents a former skilled worker who is now self-employed. In Wright's terms he is part of the petty bourgeoisie or in everyday language he is his own boss. The pace and scheduling of work and the "means of production" are all under his direct control. But

unlike the small employer he does not hire or direct labour. However, his business is very much dependent upon the unpaid labour of his wife. Significantly David still thinks of himself as working class since he has to work for a living and has no other independent source of income. His family background shows a strong attachment to the Labour Party although he has switched his allegiance to the Alliance Party. However, we should not conclude that this shift of allegiance was the result of a value change for as David reported it was not him that had changed, it was the Labour Party. In essence David could see no alternative to the market as the main organising principle of society. A view shared by a majority of his Labour friends. Indeed as we have seen he considered private provision to meet his children's needs. Yet the limiting factor here was basal. Namely that as a driving instructor working a forty hour week he could not afford private education for his children and was thrown back on relying upon State provision. Likewise experience had taught him that the market was a hard task master and that you needed State intervention to maintain and develop particular economic sectors and mitigate the dysfunctions of the free market.

Finally, a consideration of these interviews allows reflection on the validity of notions such as privatism, self interest and the break up of community. On the one hand David is "his own boss", he is no longer part of a collectivity of workers nor is he any longer a trade union member. On the other hand he has lived in the same house for 15 years and has an extensive network of friends in the locality. He is a school governor and active in the local cricket club. His wife regularly socialises outside the house.

In Michael and Diane's case their home is important to them. However, this cannot be read as home centredness since it has not stopped Michael joining the local golf club or maintaining his work friendships outside work.

What all this suggests is that we should modify the characterisation of Cramlington as a transit camp. Certainly some may buy into owner occupation, stay a short time and move on. Others have become more firmly rooted and established local friendship networks sustained through involvement in leisure, educational and other associations. Rather than a once and for all dissolution of community it is more the case of an ongoing process of disruption and re-establishment of friendship networks and interests.

As the interviews proceeded it was impossible to fit the respondents' comments with a one dimensional model of self seeking materialistic individuals. All the respondents had limited aspirations for themselves and measured themselves from where they had come from. In these terms they felt comfortable with their lot. All objected to what they saw as the harmful effects of Conservative policy on others. It simply was not a case of "I'm all right, Jack, bugger the rest".

However, the implications for the Labour Party, if the respondents' sentiments are generalisable, are severe. Michael, for example, although voting Labour, saw the Party as primarily for the disadvantaged. Anne and John, both unemployed, were fatalistic and sceptical that Labour would change anything. David no longer identified with Labour in part because of the influence of the trade unions inside the Party. Now this is not an argument for Labour moving to the right and dissolving its links with the trade unions.

It is, however, to suggest that Labour is failing to articulate the needs of Michael, David, Anne and Diane into a radical programme and organisational form that has meaning for them.

Conclusion

The content of the interviews is interesting not only for what was said but also for what was not said. Nobody, for example, offered a consistent and comprehensive analysis of capitalism and a model of a ready alternative. But such an analysis and alternative was not to be expected. For the point is that the workings of capitalist society are not obvious nor are the alternatives. Indeed the ideological complexes represented by the three main political parties accept to one degree or another the framework of capitalist society and deny the possibility of fundamental change. It is not surprising then that individuals express partial and contradictory views.

What is apparent is a deep vein of social reformism and a suspicion that Thatcherite policies had negative consequences. Hardly a revealing finding given the strength and longevity of Labourism and Liberalism in the North East.

Those in owner occupation have accepted that their housing needs are met in a privatised way. However, many of these same people are limited by their income, which in turn is a function of their occupation, from gaining access to privatised forms of education and health services.

The formation of the National Health Service, State Education post 1945 and the Nationalised Industries represented forms of meeting need based on principles distinct from market provision. In the case of health and education it was on the basis of need rather than the ability to pay. The very material existence of these forms signalling

that an alternative to the market was possible and workable. Moreover, despite complaints about waiting lists and unsympathetic service no one questioned the moral superiority of a needs based welfare system.

Yet the spread of privatised provision on an extensive scale represents the domination of a particular form and the triumph of market principles. The very extent and materiality of private provision if it persists over time making it difficult to think of other ways of meeting needs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The subject of this thesis has been social and economic change in the South East Northumberland Coalfield from the early 18th century to the near present. Inevitably this has involved the use of historical sources but has also drawn upon survey and interview material.

At the end of the day the aim of the researcher is to produce an account and in order to do this source material is filtered through the concerns and categories of the researcher. My principle interest being change in the economy and social structure.

If we go back to the beginning of the 18th century it is possible to identify the decline in influence of the landed gentry and the rise of a new ruling class. The Ridley family with its interests in trade and coal mining epitomising this new class. Moreover it was class which in its conspicuous consumption and lifestyle consciously sought to imitate the landed aristocracy.

Without labour no production can take place therefore throughout the 18th and 19th centuries labour is assembled in particular localities in order to work coal reserves. The major problems facing capital in this early period being the regulation of the coal trade in order to maintain profits and the subordination of labour. Various modes of controlling labour are therefore practiced ranging from the use of the bond system to truck, eviction and the importation of blackleg labour. The coal owners, in the last instance, relying on the forces of the State to maintain discipline.

But despite harsh and pervasive systems of control mining labour periodically resisted both oversight and attempts to hold down and cut

wages. The inherent tendency of capital however is to reduce labour to a base commodity with minimal rights in the workplace compared to the mutual obligations existing under feudalism. Significantly though this early phase of capitalist development witnesses the bringing together of individuals as workers. As Marx comments;

"Economic conditions had in the first place transformed the mass of people into workers. The domination of capital created the common situation and common interests of this class. Thus this mass is already a class in relation to capital, but not yet a class for itself."⁽¹⁾

We then see a twofold process at work whereby labour, acting as a class for itself, forms organisations of defence and self help and begins to articulate political demands reflected in the Chartist movement. Faced with pressure from below, capital and the State react with repression before yielding what can be conceded in order that essentials remain the same. Indeed it is this capacity of capital for flexibility and concession which gives leaders such as Burt and the Liberal Party their legitimacy.

While I would want to acknowledge socialist and revolutionary currents within the working class Anderson and Nairn accurately convey the trajectory of the class when they speak of it evolving separately but subordinately. Thompson also recognising the long process of containment and absorption of the class into the institutional order of capitalism.

By the end of the 19th century coal combines dominated production throughout the Northern coalfield and were integrated into iron, steel and coal by-products manufacture. A complex pattern of

inter-locking directorships reflecting the multi-layered interests of the directors.

With the major European empires hovering on the brink of the First World War the rush to re-arm produced a buoyant economy in the North East. However, this apparent upturn masked the fact of under-investment in the industries of the region as capital sought higher returns in the new consumer goods industries of the South East, in the colonies and in the U.S.A.

With the ending of the war the national economy experienced a short boom followed by slump and a deep over-production crisis starting in 1921. By June 1925 unemployment in the Northumberland Colliery area had reached 33.7% and was to remain high until another bout of re-armament boosted the regional economy.

The response of the Government and capital to the inter-war crisis was illustrated by the evidence and recommendations from the Sankey Commission of 1919 and the Samuel Commission of 1925. Sankey proposed what in effect was a collaborative arrangement whereby nationalisation is sweetened with statutory conciliation and no strike agreements. These recommendations proving unacceptable to capital and to the government of the day with the government instead deciding to buy the miners off with a wage increase and shorter working hours.

By 1926 the solution proposed by capital to the crisis was to call for wage cuts and the intensification of labour by the lengthening of the working day. Coal nationalisation was again rejected and punitive and restrictive welfare policies enacted. Rather than bringing jobs to the "distressed areas" the solution was to encourage surplus labour to transfer to other regions or emigrate to the colonies.

The defeat of the general strike strengthened reformist elements within the working class and the T.U.C. thus providing an opening for dialogue between capital and labour. At a regional level significant fractions within capital sought to escape from the dead end of neo-liberal policies by elaborating a modernisation strategy which called for the strengthening of traditional industries, the attraction of new manufacturing plants and a halt to labour transference. The establishment of regional organisations such as the North East Development Board, the Northern Industrial Group and the North East Development Association reflecting this shift to interventionism together with a willingness to incorporate leading trade unionists under the umbrella of modernisation.

By the onset of the Second World War family members of the coal dynasties such as the Ridleys were taking up wider interests in areas such as banking, insurance and finance. An aspect of the fact that the regional bourgeoisie were positioning themselves to take advantage of the modernisation policies they had played a central part in formulating.

Towards the end of the war years the Reid Committee reported that the coal industry lacked investment, had a poorly trained workforce and lower output per man shift than competitor countries. The Committee going on to criticise the coal owners for "short termism" and, in an implicit recognition of the failure of previous voluntary attempts at rationalisation, recommended compulsory amalgamation of the coal companies. However, with principle of compulsion conceded and popular pressure from the working class firmly behind State intervention, nationalisation of the industry was finally won in 1947.

But I have argued that nationalisation, although it provided the basis for safer working and national wage bargaining, cannot be read as a straightforward victory for the forces of labour. The form of nationalisation tying the coal industry to the State, limiting its autonomy and imposing financial constraints while necessitating that the Board operate within a commercial framework. Despite nationalisation the miners remained wage labour while insofar as nationalisation was a pre-condition for efficiency and modernisation it was also a cause of labour shedding. For the coal owners on the other hand, the pain of expropriation was sweetened with generous compensation payments with over £164 million paid out to private shareholders and family trusts, who were then free to invest in other areas.

The period after World War II was a time of reconstruction and energy shortage with the Coal Board aiming to keep labour in the pits until such time as the modernisation of the collieries was completed. The emphasis was therefore on maximising coal production with the 1950 Plan for Coal and the 1956 Review setting an output target of 240Mt for 1961-5. The centrality of coal is then reflected in the North East Development Area Plan and the 1952 Northumberland County Plan both of which recommended that employers of male labour be located away from the coalfields. The County Plan underlining its opposition to competing male employment by objecting to Holywell as a new town site while supporting Killingworth.,

By 1956 coal began to be substituted by cheap oil and the beginnings of nuclear power forcing the Coal Board to revise its output targets downwards. Coal production was to be concentrated in modernised pits with economic criteria replacing physical reserves as

the sign of a viable pit. The Board announcing its intention to reduce mining employment in the Seaton Valley area over the years to 1971. This retreat from the past policy of retaining male labour creating an employment crisis and providing the basis for establishing Cramlington New Town.

At this point the question arises of why the New Town should have been located at Cramlington rather than elsewhere in Seaton Valley? Here the matter of land ownership, land banking by the house building firms and networks of interest became central. My claim being that Lord Ridley because of his land interests, his directorships and his position of Northumberland County Council was a key gatekeeping figure able to influence the location of the town to his advantage.

In a regional development context Cramlington was presented as a growth point within a wider growth zone. The effects of this policy producing uneven development rather than economic growth radiating out across the sub region.

From the outset Cramlington was intended to regenerate the economy of a declining coal field while the county planners spoke of a declining coal field while the county planners spoke of the town as developing into a "self contained" and "balanced community". However, the extent to which regeneration and self containment would occur depended on the scale of incoming manufacturing plant and on a sufficient range and quality of jobs becoming locally available to allow Cramlington home buyers to live and work in the town. The frequent adjustment downwards of projected population figures together with a high level of commuting to work on Tyneside suggesting that the pre-conditions for self containment had not been met.

Unlike other New Towns in the North East Cramlington was private sector led although very much dependent upon the national and local State for the provision of infrastructure, public buildings and services and for co-ordination and planning. However, the emphasis on private sector house building for owner occupation created a disjunction between the labour market and the housing market. At times a slump in demand for housing led to a slowdown in new house building with factories constructed ahead of housing. But in any case the attraction of the town for many lay in the chance it provided to enter owner occupation rather than in any employment opportunities it had to offer. Therefore the construction of council housing took on added significance since it provided a mechanism whereby labour could be assembled to work in Cramlington's factories.

On the other hand if we go back to the 1966 and 1968 surveys there already was a substantial pool of labour at Cramlington and in the surrounding area. Here of course I am referring to female labour. What was noticeable though was the difference between the availability for work and the type of work required by the women in the old mining areas and in the New Town's private and public housing estates. Undoubtedly the existence of these reserves of female labour influenced companies considering setting up in Cramlington.

In general, survey evidence indicated that although there was some overlap, the two populations of private sector and public sector housing residents related to different labour markets. The majority of private sector residents working away from Cramlington while the local authority council house tenants were more locally committed. We would therefore expect a fall in manufacturing employment on Cramlington's industrial estates to impact more on Cramlington's council tenants than on its private housing sector residents.

From the mid 60's Cramlington's industrial estates were the location for branch plants of multi-national companies with headquarters in America or London. Compared to the inter-war years when capital was relatively tied to the region much of the area's economy was now controlled from outside. Equally, competition was no longer national but international. The impact of competition producing crisis (see O'Connor)⁽²⁾ which in turn forced individual capitals to adopt restructuring strategies in order to restore profitability or strengthen their competitive position.

In the context of economic change at the base the significant feature has been the decline of manufacturing employment at Cramlington and Blyth and the collapse of mining employment with the closure of Bates pit. These aspects of change posing a number of important questions. First, the demise of manufacturing raises the issue of the nature of the relationship between a manufacturing interest and the class interest under which it is subsumed. In other words the collapse of British manufacturing is not only a symptom of "capital logic" but also to do with the;

"more general problem of the subordinate, non hegemonic character of British manufacturing interest ... the parallel absence of a coherent manufacturing interest and consequently their subordinate role within the power bloc resulting from the special circumstances in which Britain industrialized."⁽³⁾

Second, the reliance upon "footloose" Multi-National Corporations, although meeting with some success, has not proved a secure basis for long term employment yet the County development

strategy amounts to little more than begging capital to locate in the County. What we then find is a situation where countries, regions within countries and localities within regions compete against each other for the privilege of capital's presence. However, the limitations of this strategy become quickly apparent when it is recognised that the pace of new companies and branch plants setting up in Cramlington has slowed down to a trickle from the peak of the early and mid 70's. It therefore seems that regions are competing for a diminishing flow of mobile investment. The new developments such as Boots Pharmaceuticals representing capital intensive processes employing relatively few people compared to the investment involved.

Third, the focus on restructuring the plant closure has highlighted the relative weakness of the trade unions in preventing job loss. A weakness made even more apparent by the ability of certain capitals to move production to new sites in order to take advantage of cheaper labour (see Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye).⁽⁴⁾ In the face of job loss the response of many trade unions has been to offer wage or conditions concessions or agree to rationalisation schemes in the hope of keeping or attracting companies in order to maintain their membership base.

Lastly, the closure of Bates has to be understood in the context of the wider strategic goals of the Thatcher government of disciplining labour and strengthening the "right to manage" as well as being a pre-condition for the privatisation of the coal industry. The form of nationalisation allowing the Prime Minister and the then Energy Secretary Nigel Lawson to appoint the N.C.B. Chairman Ian MacGregor for the purpose of restructuring the industry and re-organising Coal Board Management (see MacGregor).⁽⁵⁾

Another theme running through this thesis has been concerned with class structure and political orientation. With regard to class structure, Cramlington, because of its emphasis on building for owner occupation, can be viewed as changing the class composition of what was a mining area by attracting professional and white collar workers. However, rather than relying upon Registrar General categories, I have referred to the work of Wright and Braverman which when applied to Cramlington would be likely to produce an expanded working class and a bloc of individuals in contradictory class locations. This seems to me a more valuable way into understanding the processes at work rather than designating a varied collectivity of white collar workers as middle class or as a professional managerial class (see B. and J. Ehrenreich).⁽⁶⁾

However, class analysis in its Marxist mode is based first and foremost on relations within work. Those not in work I have categorised as a reserve surplus population but I have also deployed the notion of dispossession in order to highlight the fact that work has been taken away. Within Cramlington the Shankhouse Estate is the location for a reserve surplus and for peripheral workers while Parkside can be thought of as containing central workers. However, given the inadequacy of benefit levels the ability of the reserve surplus to participate in social life and to consume is heavily circumscribed (see Townsend).⁽⁷⁾

If we return again to the central workers in Parkside one argument has it that these workers are privatised, home centred and egoistic. I have objected to this characterisation as a one sided caricature.

On the other hand Dunleavy and Saunders argue that consumption cleavages are coming to outweigh class alignments as privatisation proceeds. Following Harloe I have suggested that class and consumption should not be seen as separate spheres. In fact production location sets limits on consumption and this is highlighted by the clear occupational class gradient across tenures. Moreover the majority of Cramlington residents in owner occupation are still dependent upon State provision for meeting educational and health needs.

What has happened though has been a shift to the Alliance Party amongst Parkside's private sector residents rather than to the Conservatives. This could be seen as the re-emergence of Burt type politics under another name but which was previously contained within the Labour Party. While it is important to recognise that this is not Conservatism the split in the anti-Tory vote has allowed the Conservative Party to govern uninterrupted for the last fourteen years. How to change this situation is a concern to both Parkside and Shankhouse residents but no obvious answer is apparent. It is a question I have not addressed here but an answer is urgently required if the dispossessed are to have even a minimal chance of a better life.

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